

AN  
ALARM  
TO  
UNCONVERTED SINNERS,  
BY THE  
REV. JOSEPH ALLEINE.  
WITH  
AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY,  
BY  
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INTRODUCTORY ESSAY.

THERE are two principal modes of persuading men to repent and believe the Gospel. The one consists in representing to them the “love of God,” in setting before them all the blessings which that love is ready to bestow, and in winning them over by its alluring influence, to a cordial and practical submission to the divine will. The other consists in giving them a plain and honest exhibition of the “terror of the Lord,” in pointing out to them the wrath of the Almighty against those who commit sin, in pressing upon their attention the dreadful consequences of continuing to be “enemies to him in their minds and by wicked works ;” and thus creating such alarm in them as to make them abandon their evil ways, and “flee for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them” in the Gospel.

To this latter mode of persuasion there are some who have such a strong aversion, that every person who employs it is proscribed by them, as one by whom the nature of religion is misrepresented and its influence impaired. He is a gloomy fanatic, whose imagination delights to brood over the images of misery and despair. Or he is a merciless bigot, who has no regard to the comfort of his fellow-men, but takes pleasure in torturing them with unnecessary alarm, respecting their present condition and future prospects. Or he is a candidate for low popularity—appealing to the coarsest feelings and the most stupid prejudices of the vulgar, that he may excite their astonishment, and attract their admiration. Or he is an enemy to good taste—sacrificing all that is gracious in sentiment, and gentle in language, to a passion for the dark and horrific. In short, there is scarcely an epithet of ridicule, or of reprobation, which is not applied to the minister who employs the terror of the Lord to persuade men. And while the objection to

this particular mode of addressing sinners is chiefly insisted on by those who have no faith in Christianity, or no serious regard for what Christianity teaches, it is also countenanced and urged by not a few who have experienced the power of genuine godliness, and are evidently walking in the ways of salvation.

We are willing enough to concede, that it is wrong to be always, or too frequently, dwelling on the terror of the Lord. We concede, also, that there are terms which it is neither scriptural nor proper to make use of in discussing this subject. We concede, moreover, that there may be a danger of hurting weak and delicate minds, if care be not taken to unfold it with prudence, and to place it in its proper connexion. But these concessions will apply to any other subject as well as to that which is now before us. It is not right to be perpetually insisting on any single topic, however interesting in itself, or however important in its influence. There is no doctrine within the compass of religion which may not be spoken of, and enforced in language, as pernicious as it is inappropriate and incorrect. And great indiscretion may be committed, and very injurious effects may be produced, by certain modes of explaining even the most pleasing and acceptable discoveries of the Gospel. Granting, however, that the exceptions I have alluded to were peculiar to the more awful of its statements, that forms no sufficient reason for inducing those who are concerned in expounding Christianity, either to withhold these statements altogether, or to present them with a tame and compromising aspect, or to introduce them to notice in such a way as to indicate that they are of inferior moment, and should command little respect. We hold that they are of unspeakable consequence ; that they deserve the most serious consideration ; that they should not merely be brought forward, but brought forward unmodified and undisguised ; that they should be made to bear, with as much as possible of their native character and

tendency, on the minds of those to whom they are delivered ; that the persons to whom they are offensive in this shape may trace that dislike to them which they are so ready to manifest, in some cases to infidelity, and in other cases to ignorance ; that those who fly from the preaching of such ministers, and neglect the writings of such authors, as give them a distinct and prominent place in their discussions, show neither faith, nor wisdom, nor consistency ; and that to persuade men by the terror of the Lord is at once a rational, a scriptural, a useful, and a necessary method of inculcating the Gospel, and of procuring for it its true converts, and its legitimate triumphs. We hold all this, and we shall endeavour to maintain it in the sequel of this Essay.

In the *first* place, the terror of the Lord constitutes an obvious and essential part of divine truth.

Were the doctrine which asserts it a mere fiction, the creature of an extravagant fancy, or the invention of an interested priesthood, we should deem it both foolish and criminal, to give it any place in a serious discourse which was intended to influence either the creed or the conduct of mankind. Were it nothing more than a probable conjecture, we might mention it, indeed, and leave it to its own weight : but we should not consider ourselves entitled to speak of it, and to press it, at the risk of giving offence to those whom we were attempting to edify. Were it only the result of a process of speculative reasoning, though we might take advantage of it in perfect consistency with what is uniformly done in other matters of far less importance, still, even in that case, we should not assert it with any dogmatism, or insist upon it with much pertinacity. But it falls under none of these descriptions. It possesses, in the estimation of every one who believes the Bible, the character of unquestionable truth. No man can deny it, without being prepared to deny every other statement which revelation contains : for no language can be plainer, or more explicit, than the language in which it is affirmed

and proclaimed. It is as clearly and indubitably the doctrine of Scripture, that God is holy and just, as that he is good and compassionate---that he hates the workers of iniquity, as that he loves those who fear and serve him---that he has ordained a hell, as that he has prepared a heaven---that, on the day of judgment, he will pronounce a sentence of condemnation on the wicked, as that he will pronounce a sentence of acquittal on the righteous---that the former shall go away into everlasting punishment, as that the latter shall go away into life eternal---that the anguish of the condemned sinner is absolutely certain and inconceivably great, as that the felicity of the glorified saint rests upon the promise of unchangeable faithfulness, and mocks at all our efforts to describe or imagine it.

There are some things in Scripture which are not very plainly unfolded ; and there are other things which seem to be incidentally noticed, and to be placed in rather a detached and isolated station. But this doctrine of the terror of the Lord is none of them. It stands forth in most distinct and intelligible statement. It meets us at every step of our progress through the sacred record. We have not gone beyond the third chapter of the book of Genesis, till we see it embodied in the fact of our first parents being driven out of Paradise, and of the very “ ground being cursed for their sake.” When we come to the conclusion of the Apocalypse, we are required to carry it along with us in that awful warning, that if we “ take away from the word of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away our part out of the book of life.” And from the beginning to the end of this inspired Volume, it is held out to us in every variety of form that it can be made to assume---in that of simple declaration---of formal threatening---of actual infliction---of literal phraseology---of figurative representation---of individual experience---of every thing that can instruct, and rouse, and impress the mind ; and it is presented in relation to objects of the most interesting nature and of the highest

consequence---to the character of the Supreme Being---to the manifestation of his glory---to his government of the universe---to the conduct and the destinies of his apostate creatures---to the achievements of his only-begotten Son---to the fate of this world, with all its countless generations---to the vast scene of retribution and eternity.

So much, in short, is Scripture pervaded by it, in one way or another, that were we to abstract it from every page and passage in which it occurs, we should mutilate the record of our faith to an extent far beyond what those who have not examined the subject would be ready to suppose, and render it, both in appearance and in reality, quite a different thing from that revelation which we have actually received from heaven. And if this be the case, surely it is too much to demand of those who teach Christianity, that they shall not announce the terror of the Lord at all ; or that, if they do touch upon that topic, it shall be but rarely and slightly, and with as little as possible of what renders it alarming to the profligate, and painful to the unbelieving. The simple circumstance, that it is a part of revealed truth, is sufficient to justify us in making it a part of our ministrations. The prominence that is given to it in the Bible, intimates that it is not only a reality, but a reality of great moment ; and that, in fairness, it ought to be set forth without modification and without scruple. And if, in declaring any portion of the counsel of God, it be allowable to employ the same diction, or diction as emphatic as that in which his own word has expressed it, it is but seldom indeed that those who are acquainted with Scripture language will have reason to complain of the teachers of Christianity, for the strength and the plainness of their speech, when they are denouncing the terror of the Lord.

But while we thus intrench ourselves behind the proposition, that the terror of the Lord constitutes an obvious and essential part of divine truth, we have to maintain, in the *second* place, that it is necessary for understanding the

nature, and appreciating the value, of the Gospel ; and that, without bringing it fully into view, we could not even attach any definite meaning to the terms which are used by the sacred writers, when they are unfolding its character and its consequences.

The Gospel scheme is a scheme of deliverance. Its purpose is to rescue men from certain evils in which they are involved as transgressors of the divine law. And it proposes to accomplish that purpose by a magnificent apparatus of means, which is minutely detailed to us, and held out as equally admirable and efficient. But it is perfectly evident, that till we look to the nature and extent of the evils which are to be removed, we can have no correct idea of the fitness or efficacy of the methods by which their removal is to be effected. We cannot perceive these ourselves ; we cannot make them obvious to others ; and we cannot successfully recommend the plan, to which they are alleged to belong, to the adoption, the respect, or the acquiescence of those for whose benefit it is intended. And, even though we could give some demonstration of its wisdom, or produce some assurance that it is well calculated to promote the object for which it was devised, still, how is it possible to have any clear and impressive notion of its importance, its necessity, and its value, unless there be some adequate conceptions of the danger and the misery from which it is designed to save its votaries ?

Suppose that the Gospel were expounded to those who are yet unacquainted with it, and that it were expounded in such a way as to exclude from the exposition all that refers to God's hatred of sin--his indignation against transgressors--and the penalties with which he is to visit rebellion and disobedience ; what meaning, in that case, I would ask, could they attach to its leading and fundamental tenets ? What suitableness could they perceive in its most important provisions ? What powerful reason could they discover for the earnestness with which it is addressed to the

world, and for the gratitude and joy which it claims from those to whom it is communicated ? Or suppose the promulgation of it to be accompanied with a statement of the evils from which it is to deliver them, but these evils to be so reduced in magnitude, and so veiled in soft and ambiguous phrase, as to excite no emotions of alarm ; still, I would ask, could they recognise any just accordance between the end to be attained, and the means by which its attainment is to be wrought out ? Could they see any thing like necessity or expediency in the incarnation of the Son of God, and in all the shame and agonies of his cross ? And could they be prepared for contemplating that, and all the other mysterious operations to which the Almighty has had recourse in the dispensation of the Gospel, with feelings of wonder and adoration, bearing any resemblance to those with which it is spoken of by the Apostles who were commissioned to teach it ? But let the Gospel be preached and expounded as it is really found in the inspired record ; let there be no concealment of the terror of the Lord ; let that be proclaimed, without qualification or reserve ; let there be a faithful picture given of the malignity of sin--of the avenging justice of God with respect to it--of the destruction with which its impenitent servants shall be finally overwhelmed,--and then every one must see, that in these there is something like an adequate cause for that extra-ordinary interposition of the Godhead, which is developed in the Scriptures ; that they afford a rational account of the counsels of the Almighty Father--of the humiliation and sufferings of his beloved Son--of the condescension, and strivings, and gifts of his Holy Spirit ; that they fully and satisfactorily explain all the strong and impassioned language in which the Gospel speaks of the divine mercy, and of the manner in which it has been manifested, and of the obligations which it imposes upon every one to whom it is offered, or by whom it has been experienced.

We have supposed the Gospel to be expounded without any distinct or forcible declaration of the terror of the Lord ; and we appeal to those who are conversant with its plan, whether it could, in that case, be understood or admired by any that are not previously acquainted with it. But really such a supposition could not be realised. We may safely challenge the most skilful and ingenious of metaphysical divines, to give any exposition of the Gospel which does not expressly contain, or necessarily imply, a declaration of the evils which it professes to abolish. They may speak of many things which it comprehends, without adverting to these, and no inconsistency may strike us ; but the inconsistency will immediately appear, when they attempt to state any of its peculiar and characteristic doctrines ; and they will find an insuperable difficulty in giving us a connected view of these doctrines, independently of, or detached from, the doctrine of man's miserable condition as a sinner, and of his hopeless condition as an impenitent and unbelieving sinner. They may dilate on the goodness of God ; but that is not the Gospel, and has no necessary connection with it ; for man would have experienced God's goodness just as much as he does at present, if he had acted so as to render the Gospel unnecessary ; and his goodness must be the theme of admiration and praise among all those sinless beings to whose character and circumstances the Gospel has no adaptation : and, after all, the goodness of God, which is magnified in the Gospel, is magnified on account of the greatness of those calamities from which it emancipates, as well as on account of the greatness of those benefits which it confers on its objects.—They may illustrate and recommend the precepts of morality ; but neither do these constitute the Gospel : they would have been binding on the consciences and the conduct of mankind, although no such dispensation as the Gospel had ever been revealed : and, after all, the precepts of morality, as taught in the Gospel, are enforced by motives that refer to the

miseries out of which the Gospel brings us, and sanctioned by penalties whose awfulness the Gospel rather aggravates than diminishes.—They may expatiate on the glory and the blessedness of the heavenly world ; but heaven is not, any more than the other particulars we have alluded to, a distinctive blessing of the Gospel,—it is the place to which man was destined if he had never fallen from his primeval innocence, and the Gospel has no proper application to a state of innocence : and, after all, heaven as exhibited in the Gospel, is an object of hope to guilty creatures who have been first redeemed from hell ; its sainted inhabitants rejoice in having been “ washed from sins,” and saved from condemnation,—and while the Gospel promises its felicity to all who believe in the Saviour, and obey his will, it fails not at the same time to declare, that those who are of a contrary character shall be excluded from its happy mansions, and doomed to woe unutterable and unending.

In these, and similar instances, many things may be advanced out of the Gospel, in the way of instruction, which do not bring directly into view the terror of the Lord, though, as we have seen, it is not difficult to show that even these points cannot be fully and faithfully explained without the help of that argument. But take the Gospel as a scheme of redemption, which is its true and proper character ; consider it as a divine contrivance for the accomplishment of that end ; let all its facts, and positions, and commandments, and promises, and threatenings, and blessings be regarded in their genuine connection with the great system into which they enter, either as constituent parts or as useful appendages ; and the terror of the Lord, in one shape or another, will present itself to your observation, and demand your homage. It is that from which there is a divine interposition to deliver you :—or it is that which you are entreated to embrace the means and the opportunity of escaping :—or it is that by which you are to be aided in taking a just and comprehensive survey of the

attributes and administration of God :—or it is that which is to subdue in your hearts the power of sinful propensities, and to arrest in your lives the progress of sinful habits :—or it is that which is to shut you up to the faith of him who bore “ the chastisement of your peace, that by his stripes you might be healed :” —or it is that which is to awaken and cherish your feelings of gratitude for the visitations of divine pity in the behalf of your ruined souls :—or it is that which is to supply a subject for your song of praise, when in the land of celestial bliss you look back on the perils out of which you were rescued, and burst forth into hallelujahs to Him who saved you from them :—or it is that which, in the righteous judgment of Omnipotence, shall fall upon every one who sins, and repents not—who lives in rebellion against God, and dies without faith in the Saviour—who will not be persuaded by the frowns of offended heaven to depart from the iniquity of his ways, and makes a mock of those messengers of the truth who warn him of his danger, and tell him that he must return to God, or that he must perish for ever.

And how can it be otherwise ? The Gospel is founded on the principle of God’s immaculate holiness and retributive justice, and on the fact that man, as a transgressor of God’s law, has become subject to its penalty ; and its whole scope and tendency, as a scheme proceeding from his Maker, is to bring him out of that state of guilt and wretchedness into which he is plunged, and, as a scheme proposed to himself for his acquiescence and adoption, to prevail upon him to cling to the offered deliverance, and to employ the means by which it may effectually and finally become his. And if this be a correct description of the Gospel, how can it be faithfully preached, how can it be fully comprehended, how can it be sufficiently prized, and how can it be cordially accepted, or joyfully embraced, or steadfastly retained, unless those to whom it is addressed have been made to see God’s utter and irreconcilable

hostility to sin—unless they are aware of their guilt, and the condemnation inseparably attached to it—unless they are made to know and to feel what “ a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God”—unless they not only receive at first, but continue to entertain strong impressions of the dreadful consequences of disobedience, impenitence, and unbelief—and unless, therefore, in all our explanations and enforcements of Christianity, we give a prominent place, and a loud voice, to the terror of the Lord. To judge of the worth and efficacy of any medicinal prescription, we must be apprised of the nature and effects of the disease which it is intended to cure, and that the patient may be induced to follow the one, he must be convinced that he labours under the other, and that unless he submits to the proposed remedy, he must lay his account with protracted illness, or with speedy dissolution. A city of refuge is but an empty name, except we associate with it the idea of some danger, that cannot otherwise be avoided ; the circumstances and the imminence of the danger must be known, in order to ascertain how far the refuge which is provided is requisite or sufficient ; and he who is invited to flee to it, will not see much meaning in the invitation, or any occasion for his complying with it, unless he be satisfied that the danger exists, that it is not less alarming than it is real, and that without immediate recourse to the place of security which is appointed for him, he must be inevitably overwhelmed and lost. In like manner, it is in vain to aim at, or to expect any thorough understanding of the Gospel scheme, or any heartfelt recognition of its value, or any eager ambition for its blessings, or any humble and practical submission to its authority, so long as there is no adequate effort made to convince men of the loathsomeness, the misery, and mortal tendency of the disease of sin, for which the Gospel is the instituted remedy—so long as there is but a feeble representation, or no representation at all, of the awful and incalculable perils to which moral guilt exposes

its victims, and from which the Gospel is ordained to be as a city of refuge—so long as we do not bring forward with decision, and proclaim with freedom, the terror of the Lord, which the Gospel has been compassionately revealed at once to turn away from the sinner, and to make an instrument of his conversion to God.

Nor is it to be forgotten, that even those terms which are employed in speaking of Christianity, and our use of which is never objected to, have no meaning but what they derive from the “terror of the Lord.” Christianity is distinguished by *Mercy* : but what is mercy? Mercy is the exercise of goodness towards those who are in circumstances of danger and misery. Take away these circumstances, or keep them out of sight, and you deprive the word “mercy” of its true import, and render it wholly inapplicable to the case of man. But let his danger and misery be acknowledged—let them be unfolded in all their certainty and extent—let those consequences which must ensue, if they are not averted, be exhibited without disguise ;—and then mercy becomes a significant and appropriate word, and we are able not only to perceive its meaning, but in some measure, to scan its vastness, and to rejoice in its triumphs, as these are displayed in the Gospel.—Christianity is a plan of *Salvation* ; and salvation is a word which every one repeats with pleasure and delight. But can any one repeat it with understanding, and with a proper sense of what renders it an object of complacency, or a source of joy, who thinks not of the terror of the Lord ? It is impossible : for salvation, irrespective of those evils in deliverance from which it mainly or altogether consists, is but a sound to which no precise idea is annexed. You exult in the salvation of the Gospel ; but is not your exultation groundless, and absurd, and delusive, unless your attention has been directed to the calamities out of which it rescues you ; and will not your exultation be rational and lively, in proportion to the clearness and the interest with which you have realized

these calamities in your imagination ? Beyond all controversy, this must be the case.—And then how often, and how gladly is the term *Gospel* itself employed ! But what does this term signify ? It signifies good tidings. And what are these tidings, and in what respect are they good ? They are tidings which assure us of God’s pity, and of his sending his Son into the world for our benefit ; and they are good tidings, because they tell us that we who believe in the name of Christ, shall be delivered from the guilt which had shut against us the gates of heaven, and made us “children of wrath, and heirs of hell :” and we can only welcome them with becoming gratitude, and give them a reception as lasting as it is sincere, by being deeply impressed with the tremendous nature and everlasting duration of that punishment, from which they intimate our deliverance.

It is therefore in conformity to the very purpose and constitution of Christianity, that we persuade by the terror of the Lord. Every prejudice that is cherished, and every opposition that is made to this mode of persuasion, amounts to an impeachment of that wisdom by which the Christian scheme was devised and arranged. And its ministers may not only plead their right, but also plead the necessity that is laid upon them by the very nature of the system with which they are put in trust, to declare freely, and frequently, and earnestly, that there is no misery like that of having “departed from the living God”—that, as sinners, men lie helpless under the burden of his righteous displeasure—and that, if they do not repent, his wrath will finally “come upon them to the uttermost.”

In the *third* place, when we use the terror of the Lord to persuade men, we accommodate ourselves to the principles of human nature, and act precisely as every man does, who is desirous to save another from what is evil or pernicious. Our conduct is rational in the best and strictest sense of that word.

Man, in his original constitution, is made susceptible of the emotion of fear. He has an instinctive aversion to pain and injury, of every kind, and in every degree. So that when subjected to affliction, whatever it may be, he naturally tries to get it removed ; and when threatened with it, he as naturally tries to turn it away from him. It is true, indeed, that he often pursues, with a fatal eagerness, what is fraught with the most serious mischief ; but it is only because the mischief is concealed from his view, or because he flatters himself that it may be ultimately escaped. Let it be distinctly presented to him, as attached to the course which he is following, and let him be convinced that it will infallibly result from his perseverance in that course,—and his fear will be awakened, he will shrink from what is certainly to involve him in suffering, and he will stop short in the career to which he can see no other termination. It is on this principle that human laws uniformly proceed, in the various sanctions which they annex to disobedience and crime. It is to this principle that every system of mere morality we are acquainted with, more or less appeals, in its endeavours to guard the virtuous against the assaults of temptation, and to reclaim the vicious from their unworthy habits. And it is by the same principle that our admonitions are regulated, when as parents, or teachers, or neighbours, or friends, we warn those, in whom we take an interest, against any step that might prove hurtful or destructive to their welfare. We know, that in human nature, there is a dislike to evil in its every form. We know that every man is afraid of it when he sees it coming upon him. We know that there is scarcely an individual of whose conduct a large proportion is not actuated by such feelings. And we know, that in the attempts that are made to restrain the wickedness of the bad, and to preserve the integrity of the good, whether these attempts are combined with the authority of a ruler, or with the kindness of a friend, or with the prudence of a sage, the constitutional dread of evil, which is common to the good

and to the bad, is intentionally, perpetually, and, in a certain measure, successfully addressed.

Now, when we employ the terror of the Lord to persuade men, we do nothing more than what is universally done in cases of a similar kind ; we act in precisely the same manner in which those very persons act, by whom our mode of procedure is objected to, and condemned. We believe that sinners are under the curse of God's law, which they have broken ; we believe that their condition, in this respect, is full of peril and of misery ; and, we believe, that if they continue in sin, and reject the method which infinite mercy has provided for their redemption, their ruin is inevitable, and their condemnation aggravated. Believing all this to be true, we state it to sinners ; we state it explicitly ; we state it repeatedly and urgently ; and thus endeavour to stir up in them that fearful apprehension of suffering which their Maker has implanted in their nature, and which is every day, and every hour, operated upon, for the purpose of producing effects similar to these at which we aim—of persuading them to renounce that which is pernicious to them, and to adopt the means by which their safety may be secured. And when we make such a statement, we do nothing that is new and unprecedented in the treatment of rational beings. We make no experiment on their minds, which any man can allege to be unusual, as certain persons allege it to be harsh and offensive. We merely comply with a practice which has been observed in all countries, and in all ages, and in all communities, and in all circumstances, from the beginning of the world until now. We follow the rule prescribed by the great Creator of our moral frame—the rule which is invariably conformed to by the illiterate and the learned, the old and the young, the wicked and the holy—the rule to whose propriety and influence, the experience of all mankind bears its strong and undisputed testimony.



This, indeed, would not justify us in using the terror of the Lord, if the terror of the Lord were a mere phantom. But we are not to be considered as contending with those who deny the wrath of the Almighty against sin, and the future punishment of sinners. Their denial of these is only a branch of their denial of Christianity at large ; and we are not at present pleading for the truth of Christianity ; we are taking for granted the truth of that system, and are defending a particular mode of giving to it its full effect on such as stand in need of it. And since there is a penalty affixed to the breach of God's commandments, we are maintaining it to be rational, as well as useful, to set that penalty distinctly in the view of sinners, and to alarm them with the prospect of its infliction.

Neither would we be justified in what we argue for, were there any thing in the terror of the Lord, so different from other evils, as to render it improper to address the fears of men in the former case, while it is allowed to be proper in the latter. But the only difference that we can perceive, is all on our side of the question. The terror of the Lord is on the same footing with all other evils, in as far as both contain what men are unwilling to endure, and anxious to escape from and avoid. And in this simple view, an appeal to the fears of men is equally rational as to both. If, however, such an appeal is rational as to both, it must be at least a worthier exercise of reason to make the appeal, where that deliverance which is to be accomplished is more important in its nature and in its issue. And surely, if it be rational to excite alarm in your minds, when warning you against violating the law of man, who can only " kill the body, and after that hath no more that he can do," it must be rational, *a fortiori*, to deter you from iniquity and impenitence, as the subjects of that God, who has not only declared that he hates the workers of iniquity, and that except they repent they must perish, but who is mighty as he is just, and " who, after he has killed the body, can cast

both soul and body into hell fire for ever." Nor is it correct to say, that, when we speak of the terror of the Lord, and address ourselves to the fears of men, we act inconsistently with the peculiar character of the gospel. We are far from being dissatisfied with the attributes of peace, love, comfort, compassion, being ascribed to it as its distinguishing attributes, and as constituting its imperishable claim to our most grateful and affectionate regards. We glory in it as a dispensation of the richest grace ; as breathing the very spirit of good will ; as abounding in consolation ; as cherishing the hope that is full of immortality ; as pointing to the regions of everlasting rest. But we must not forget, that the Gospel is revealed to creatures, who are to be prevailed upon to accept of the blessings which it offers, by acceding to the terms which it prescribes ; and that though it had said nothing as to the way in which that object was to be gained, we should have thought ourselves warranted, in presenting God's highest gift to the children of men, to employ all the means, which, by his own appointment, were adapted to the structure of their moral nature, and calculated, in that view, to assist in securing their acquiescence and submission. And we must not forget, that while it would have been our duty, on this account, to urge the Gospel on the reception of sinners, by touching upon their aversion, and making all their fears alive, to the pain and misery consequent on their rejection of it, even though the Gospel had not directed us to do so, we are in truth but conforming to the mode of proceeding which the Gospel itself avowedly and unceasingly employs, when calling upon men to become what it proposes to make them--believing and penitent, holy and happy.--And this, by the way, we consider to be one great proof of its divine original. It has nothing romantic or Utopian in it--either in the objects to which it points, or in the methods by which it seeks to attain them. It is accommodated to man--not as fancy, or speculation, or partial views would make him--but as he is really

known and seen to be—both as to the nature with which he is endowed, and the situation in which he is placed. It exhibits the plan which has been contrived for his pardon and redemption as a sinful and ruined creature. And there is not an original principle or sensibility of his mind which it does not take advantage of to mould him into a Christian, to accomplish his salvation, and to secure his eternal felicity. As he has an inherent desire for good, it presents to him the most desirable good that he can enjoy. As he has an instinctive abhorrence of suffering, it holds out to him all that is most painful in his circumstances, and most alarming in his prospects, as a rebel against Almighty God. And when it is pouring upon him the promises and invitations of that divine mercy which has provided for his recovery, and thus applies itself to one department of his nature, it applies itself with no less emphasis to another department of his nature, by proclaiming the warnings and the threatenings of that divine vengeance which must finally overtake him, if he perseveres in his apostacy.

From what the Christian revelation teaches us on this subject, it is more than probable that God, in the management of all his rational creatures, recognizes the principal of fear, and employs the motives that correspond with it. And, indeed, wherever freedom of choice and conduct is possessed, and outward circumstances are to have any weight in regulating that freedom, we can scarcely imagine it to be otherwise. It would appear, that the very highest order of beings, of whom we have any intimation, are aware of the consequences of rebellion against their Maker. These consequences have been awfully presented to them, in the ruin which befel their guilty compeers, who were banished from heaven, and are “reserved in chains of darkness to the judgment of the great day.” And we cannot possibly conceive that the miserable fate of these apostate angels should not impress those holy spirits, who have kept their first estate, with a deep and affecting sense of the evils

to which they also must be subjected, if they break their allegiance to their almighty King ; and operate, to a certain extent, in securing that attachment, and that obedience to him from which all their honour and happiness are derived. But, with regard to man, it is manifest that he never was so situated as to be kept ignorant of suffering in its connection with sinning, or insensible to the fear of enduring, in consequence of deserving it. While yet existing in all the incorruptness and purity of his primeval state—as free from unholy inclinations as from actual sin—with the image of the immaculate God unsullied and undefaced in his soul—even then the terror of the Lord was sounded in his ears ; and, though he was doubtless bound to obedience by the cords of love, yet his hand was at the same time warded off from the fruit of the forbidden tree, by that frightful denunciation, “In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.” And as this was done to prevent man from falling into moral guilt, and into the destruction which it merited, so the Gospel most rationally, wisely, and consistently does the same thing, in the character of a dispensation suited to man, as having actually become guilty, and thus destroyed himself ; and does it with the gracious design of persuading him to accept of emancipation from that misery against which the original threatening was intended to guard him. The terror that was spoken to him in paradise, may be still more legitimately spoken to him in this sinful wilderness. If it was wise to awaken his fears of a conditional punishment, when in heart and life he was perfectly innocent, it cannot but be equally wise to bring into operation the same species of influence, now that he has lost his innocence, is under the sentence of condemnation, and has a mind so hardened and perverse, as unquestionably to need a far more powerful and awakening application to bring him back to God, than was deemed requisite at first to preserve him in his hitherto willing and unbroken allegiance. And he that formed the machinery of the first

covenant, also formed the machinery of the second covenant. In both he suited his measures to the intellectual and moral nature which he had conferred upon mankind. And they who employ the terror of the Lord, act in accordance with the soundest principles of reason, as these have been not only acknowledged in the universal practice of man, but settled by the authority, and recognized in the administration of “the only wise God.”

In the *fourth* place, we have the example of the inspired teachers of religion to justify us in having recourse to the terror of the Lord.

The Prophets whom God anciently commissioned to call nations or individuals to repentance, dwelt with much emphasis on God’s abhorrence of sin, and on the desolating judgments with which he would visit those who obstinately persisted in it. They never hesitated to bring forward that topic on all such occasions ; and, in bringing it forward, they never seem to have had any doubt of its importance and legitimacy, or any fear of giving offence, or of doing harm, to those upon whom it was enforced. On the contrary, they introduced it without scruple ; they often placed it in the very front of their message ; they clothed it in the strongest language ; they connected it with the most impressive illustrations ; and whether the wicked, whom they endeavoured to reclaim by it, listened with forbearance or with obduracy, they left it sounding in their ears, and striking upon their hearts, in all its native and appalling energy. True, they spoke of God’s pardoning mercy—of his willingness to save—of the tenderness of that compassion which he felt for his ungrateful and disobedient people ; and these they failed not to present to them in a manner the most affecting and attractive. But in every communication which they made to men, the thunders of divine indignation, and divine threatening, either preceded, or followed, or accompanied the “still small voice” of mercy which heaven had directed them to breathe. And in

all their official intercourse with those whom they were appointed to warn or to instruct, we observe the boldest, the most unqualified, and the most deeply-coloured representations of God’s wrath against impenitent transgressors, both in this world and in the world to come.

The same thing is unequivocally seen in the conduct of the Apostles, which is still more to our purpose. We do not admit, indeed, that they administered a dispensation substantially different from that which was administered by the prophets. It was the same dispensation which employed the services of the one and of the other. But by the time that it came into the hands of the former, it had assumed a milder shape, and had a more distinct character of love impressed upon it, than what it bore when the latter were ordained to support and to promulgate it. And yet even with them the terror of the Lord is a subject of frequent recurrence, of indispensable moment, of earnest and unceasing inculcation. They were busily, and delightfully, and divinely occupied in publishing the glad tidings of salvation—in declaring the purposes and the plans of God’s saving grace—in “preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ”—in diffusing the balm of heavenly consolation—in recommending the charity which “thinketh no evil”—in unfolding the glories of a blessed immortality. But, in the midst of all these soothing and animating themes, do we ever find them forgetting to ply the consciences of sinners with arguments drawn from God’s punitive justice—from the ruinous effects of disobedience—from the nature, the certainty, and the duration of that penalty which gives its holy sanction to the law that they had broken ? Of this subject, terrific as it is, in every view that can be taken of it, and discordant as it appears to be with the general tenor of their message—of this subject they are never unmindful. They never blink it in its sternest and most forbidding form. They never seem to think it incompatible with their office as ministers of the God of love, and of the Prince of

Peace, to enlarge upon it. They set it forth without the least attempt to break down the ruggedness of its aspect, or to veil one of those features of severity and dreadfulness, which so many make a pretext for excluding it from among the objects of their serious contemplation. They treat it with unshrinking and uncompromising fidelity--presenting it to our eye, and pressing it on our observation, in all its true and terrible magnitude--clothing it in language so plain, and in figures so striking, that but for the authority of the Bible, our use of them would not be tolerated either by the tasteful or the pious--and avowing it to be a principle on which they deliberately and systematically act as faithful ministers of God's word, that "knowing the terror of the Lord, they persuade men."

But we can appeal to a greater than the prophets, or the apostles. The terror of the Lord was proclaimed by Jesus Christ himself. He was predicted as one "anointed to preach good tidings to the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, to comfort all that mourn;" and this amiable and endearing character he fully realized, in the whole of his deportment. He spoke comfortably to his people, and compassionately to his enemies; and the tender mercy which adorned his active life, shone forth with all its sweetness, and with all its power, in the purpose and the circumstances of his agonizing death. But was he all along silent as to the anger of God against the wicked? Did he refrain from giving his testimony to the severity of divine justice, and to the fearfulness of being subjected to its pressure? Did he withhold warnings, and rebukes, and upbraidings, from the presumptuous guilt, and the persevering impenitence, and the hardened unbelief that he was doomed to witness among the Jews? Or, when constrained to lift up his voice in the accents of alarm, did he conceal or palliate any part of the truth respecting the "perdition of ungodly men;" or did he adopt a style and a manner accommodated to the polished taste of critics, the grave

doubts of philosophers, or the fine feelings of sentimentalists? No: it would have been strange, indeed, if he who was sent to save sinners by the sacrifice of himself, and who, in his sacrificial offering, gave the most emphatic demonstration that can be conceived, of God's abhorrence of sin, and of the terrors of the "second death," had said nothing explicitly, and nothing strongly on these points, to the unholy and untoward generation among whom he dwelt, and taught, and laboured. This would have been strange, indeed; but this strange thing did not happen. Our blessed Saviour, to whom we are not seldom referred as a pattern of gracious and kindly preaching, ceased not, from the commencement to the termination of his ministry upon earth, to address himself to the fears and apprehensions of the human heart. And in doing so, he made use of statements as strong, of figures as bold, and of terms as unmeasured, as any that have ever been employed by his apostles under the New Testament, or by his prophets under the Old.

It is true, all these messengers were inspired; and in many respects they might exercise a freedom which it would be improper or imprudent in the ordinary teachers of religion to use. This remark, however, will not apply to the present case. For when we say, that they employed the terror of the Lord to persuade men, we do not so much refer to their mode of delivering the truth, as to the particular topics of which they treated. And if they felt it dutiful and necessary to expatiate upon that "wrath which has been revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men," it cannot be undutiful or unnecessary in us to follow the same course, and to enforce the same doctrine. That God whose terror we proclaim, is the same that he was in their day. The Gospel which we preach is the same. The nature and the heart of man, with which we have to do, are the same. All the circumstances which could ever at any former period affect the case,

“continue as they were from the beginning.” And nothing can be adduced to show, that we should contradict the example of Christ, and of his prophets, and of his apostles, who invariably tried to persuade men by the terror of the Lord ; or that, we should not like them declare, that God “will by no means clear the guilty”—that “the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God”—“that the power of his anger,” as well as the extent of his love, “passeth knowledge”—that “indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, will fall upon every soul of man that doth evil”—that hypocrites such as the Scribes and Pharisees were, cannot “escape the damnation of hell”—that those who are not prepared for heaven, who are unprofitable, or who do iniquity, “shall be cast into outer darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth”—that “the wrath of God abideth upon them” that believe not—that “except sinners repent, they shall all perish”—that, on the last day, the wicked shall rise to “everlasting shame and contempt”—that they “shall not stand in the judgment,” nor mingle “in the congregation of the righteous”—that they shall cry to “the mountains and rocks to fall on them, and hide them from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb”—that they shall have that sentence pronounced upon them, which calls them accursed, bids them depart from the only source of happiness, and sends them into the place of punishment, “prepared for the devil and his angels”—that they shall be “cast into a lake which burneth with fire and brimstone”—and that “the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever.”

These declarations are, indeed, of terrible import, and may well cause the stoutest heart to tremble. But they are declarations which are dictated by, and fraught with, mercy. And this is the *fifth* consideration, which we advance in favour of the mode of persuading men by the terror of the Lord.

They are not our best friends, who always speak to us the things that are smoothest and most agreeable, and who most scrupulously abstain from what is offensive to our feelings. It is no proof of true kindness, to consult our present repose at the expense of our ultimate safety—to conceal from us what it is most important that we should know, merely to prevent a temporary agitation or inconvenience—to attend to our false delicacy, or our short-sighted prejudices, and, at the same time, to neglect what may contribute to our highest and most enduring interests. And it indicates no want of affectionate regard, to say or to do what may wound our minds, in the mean time, with painful recollections, or with distressing anticipations, when these are requisite for securing to us an invaluable and permanent benefit ; or to deprive us of what is dearest to our hearts, when the deprivation is to make room for objects which have an infinitely higher claim on our attachment, as being infinitely more conducive to our welfare and happiness. On the contrary, it is evident, that those who act the former part, are, whether by intention or through mistake, our real enemies, and that those who act the latter part are benefactors to us, of the most genuine and enlightened description.

The application of these remarks to the subject under discussion is obvious. It is not for the mere purpose of alarming sinners, nor is it for the ungenerous purpose of harrowing up their feelings, that we hold out to them the terror of the Lord. We should deem it cruel, thus to sport with their comfort, as we should deem it impious, thus to trifle with a part of revealed truth. The object we have in view is to promote their welfare—to effectuate their salvation—to prevail upon them to “flee from the wrath to come,” and to “turn to the strong-hold, as prisoners of hope.” Having such an interesting and precious object in view, we have recourse to the means which, by the divine blessing, promise to be effectual for its attainment. And

one of the most important of these means, according to the dictates of reason, the authority of Scripture, and the lessons of experience, is to be found in the faithful exposition of those sad and ruinous consequences, in which sin is sure to involve its unrepenting votaries.

It would be very easy for us to avoid the topic altogether, or to strip it of all which renders it most formidable and forbidding—to whisper smooth sayings into the ear of the careless worldling, or the hardened transgressor—to say “Peace, peace, to them, when there is no peace”—to descant on the beauties of virtue, when they are making no efforts to escape from the penalties of ungodliness and vice—to paint to them the joys of heaven, when we see them hastening, with bold and headlong steps, down to the abodes of hell—to deal most gently with their consciences, so gently that they shall scarcely feel it, when they are evidently wrapped up in self-righteousness, or cased in indifference, or covered with the adamant of a profligate infidelity—to speak so lightly of sin, and so little of the tribulation that awaits it, as to make them more than half-contented with their spiritual condition, when yet that condition is full of guilt and peril—to indulge them with such a “lovely song” about the goodness of God, as to charm away all their fear of his displeasure, though they have been living in contempt of his goodness, and in defiance of his displeasure, and have not repented of it—and to nourish in them the pleasing but delusive dream, that all is well with their soul’s estate, while it is plain that they have no vital faith in the Saviour, and are living “without God in the world,” and are “vessels of wrath fitted for destruction.” It would be very easy to do all this ; and no doubt it is a sort of treatment which would meet with much acceptance from those who have an antipathy to the use of terror, and would procure for us the reputation of meekness and mildness, as ministers of the Gospel. But not to speak of the want of fidelity, and of wisdom, and of consistency,

which such a mode of management would evince, we may well ask, whether it would not decisively betray a complete destitution of that mercy, which every minister of the Gospel should feel for the perishing sinners that he is called to address—whether, if the Bible be indeed true, it is not the most deliberate and destructive cruelty that could be practised upon them by their bitterest foes—whether, it would not be better and safer for them to be away from all instruction whatever, than to be thus exposed to the ignorant and mistaken lenity of teachers who lay such a flattering unction to their souls, and who “heal their hurt so slightly.”

How differently would you act in cases of incalculably less moment ! If you saw a man walking heedlessly to the brink of a precipice, and just ready to tumble over it, would you allow him to move onward, till you had uttered a few gentle words on the safety and propriety of retracing his steps ? Or would not the impulse of common humanity prompt you to send forth such a note of alarm, even at the risk of shocking his feelings, as might arrest him in a moment, and save him from the dismal fate to which he had made such a near approach ? And when we behold sinners standing thoughtlessly and madly on the precipice of guilt, with but one short step between them and the abyss of endless woe, can we fail, if we have any pity for them, instantly to address ourselves to their instinctive horror at destruction, and, by the voice of warning, to make them start back from the yawning gulph into which a moment’s delay might have plunged them, and seek for their security and “established going” in “the true and living way?”—Had you a child whose life depended on the amputation of a limb, and if he refused to undergo the operation, on account of the pain and inconvenience it would cost him, would you deem it sufficient to confine your efforts to the method of mild entreaty and promised reward ? Or would not you, without hesitation, command his ready assent, and

fix his wavering resolution, by telling him plainly of his danger, and assuring him that he must either submit or die ? And when we see a fellow-creature persisting in a sinful habit, which threatens to prove the ruin of his immortal spirit, are not we called upon, by our sentiments of compassion, to point out to him the fatal effects of persevering in his delinquency, and to say to him, in the language of our Saviour, who seems to have had a similar illustration in his eye when he said, “ If thy hand offend thee, cut it off ; it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands, to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched ; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.”—Suppose that in passing the house of your friend at the dead hour of midnight, you were to see the flames bursting from it with a fury which threatened immediate destruction to all its unconscious inhabitants—how would you proceed ? Would you knock as if you were unwilling to disturb their rest ? Would you think of practising such nice and delicate management, while the fire was extending its ravages through the whole dwelling, and its inmates were still unaware of the impending ruin ? Or rather, would not your first and whole endeavour be to rouse them from their sleep ? And, for this purpose, would not you be regardless of any momentary agitation they might suffer ? And would not you knock again and again, and louder and louder still, till their slumbers were broken, and their eyes awake to the peril that surrounded them ? And when we see men buried in the sleep of spiritual death, dwelling at ease in “ the tents of wickedness,” and the fire of divine vengeance already kindling, as it were, on their devoted habitations, will mercy to their souls permit us to lose a moment in trying to rescue them from the perdition that is fast gathering around them ? Will it not constrain us to thunder in their ear the terror of the Lord, that they may be roused from their lethargy, and made to tremble for the visitation of divine

wrath that is coming upon them ? Will not we be constrained by its power to forget all minor considerations, and to send, if possible, into their very hearts such a knell of warning, as that they may arise, and flee for their life, and take refuge with Him who alone can save them from “ dwelling with the devouring flames, and lying down in the everlasting burnings” of Jehovah’s fury ? This is true mercy ; and it is the mercy that we exercise when, in such circumstances, we employ the terror of the Lord to persuade men. We remind them of the “ fiery indignation that is to consume” them, if they continue to be “ adversaries” of God. We point to the miserable conclusion of that course of iniquity or licentiousness which they are running. We thus, by appealing to one of the most powerful and influential principles of their nature, endeavour to stop them in their guilty career. We sing to them of mercy and of judgment : and we say to them, in the spirit of the one and in the prospect of the other, “ Turn ye, turn ye ; for why will ye die ?”

The argument, then, appears to be quite conclusive in favour of our using the terror of the Lord to persuade men. But we shall be told, notwithstanding, that the terror of the Lord will never make a Christian : and neither it will. We know of no single consideration whatever, be it as important and as powerful as it may, which, by itself, will make a Christian, and we are very far from ascribing to the operation of fear alone, or to any representations, however awful and impressive, of the effects of sin, such a mighty and complete result as a saving conversion to God. We do not think that a man will apply to a physician, or follow his prescription, who has no belief in the reality, no feeling of the malignity, and no apprehension for the consequences, of his disease. And just as little do we think that such a belief, and such a feeling, and such an apprehension, will produce one cordial movement towards the physician, or any

submission to his advice, unless there is a previous conviction that he possesses skill sufficient to effectuate a cure, that he is willing to exert it for that end, and that a proper application will be attended with the desired success. All that we maintain in the present case is, that of different means to be employed in prevailing upon a sinner to embrace the Gospel, neither the least important, nor the least efficacious is that which consists in affecting him with the dread of divine wrath and of future punishment. We do not even say that he must first of all be alarmed at the perils in which he is involved, before any change can be produced. We do not thus limit the operations of God's Spirit to any specific plan. His modes of procedure are various ; and sometimes it is one circumstance, and sometimes another, which he makes effectual for bringing a transgressor to think seriously of his spiritual condition, and to turn to the Lord. But we maintain that, in the natural order of things, the sinner must be roused to a sense of his danger, before he can be persuaded to close with an overture of salvation. And with whatever view the process originates, at some period or other it necessarily implies that he sees himself as a sinner, condemned of God, and liable to the pains of hell ; and without this it never can be said to be completed, or put beyond the suspicion of being a mere delusion of the fancy, or of the feelings. It may have been an affecting display of the love of God, or of the compassion of Christ, which originally moved his heart, and led him to " mind the things which belong to his peace ;" but let the influence of these motives be analysed, and the subsequent stages of his progress examined, and it will be found that the love of God, and the compassion of Christ, gathered a great and essential portion of their constraining power, from the miseries of that state out of which they are exerted to redeem him ; and that every step of his practical acquiescence in the plan of redemption, was quickened by the consideration of the awful consequences of unforgiven sin,

as exhibited in the word of God, which of course he took for his directory, and in the death of Jesus, to which, of course he looked for his deliverance. It was not the terror which came upon the jailor of Philippi, that made him a believer ; but it was terror which led him to cry out, " Sirs, what must I do to be saved ;" and if he had not been alarmed by the extraordinary events which had just happened, and had not been forced by his alarm to put the question, there is no reason to suppose that he would ever have been rescued from the state of supineness and unbelief in which the apostles found him. Neither was it the mere evils of his condition, which made the Prodigal in the parable a real penitent : but if no sense of present wretchedness, and no fear of coming sorrows, had pressed upon his mind, we have no ground for thinking that he would ever have " come to himself," or remembered, with a mixture of regret and desire, the comforts and the security of the home which he had foolishly abandoned. If he was encouraged to return, by what he knew of the kindness and compassion of that father to whom he had been so ungrateful, we can have no doubt that his homeward steps were accelerated by the vivid recollection of what he endured when famine withered his strength, and of what he dreaded when death was staring him in the face. And at the delightful moment when he felt himself safe and happy under the roof of paternal affection, we belie the dictates of nature, and the very language of the narrative, if we do not believe that former suffering and former terror, increased the raptures that now filled his bosom, and that his heart responded to all that was implied in the exclamation of his exulting parent, " This, my son was *lost*, and he is found ; he was *dead*, and is alive again."

It is not to be denied, that some stout-hearted sinners, who have withstood all the denunciations of divine anger, and have sat Sabbath after Sabbath, and year after year, unmoved under the ministry of terror, have at length yielded to a more gentle application, and bowed their



stubborn necks to the yoke of him who is meek and lowly. But as little is it to be denied, that others to whom the message of peace and reconciliation has been long addressed in vain—who have hardened themselves against abounding grace—and who seemed to become more indifferent the more that they were urged and besought by the mercies of God, have at last been roused from their death-like repose by the terror of the Lord, and impelled to ask after the way of escape ; and constrained to accept of those offers of pardon, which had formerly been heard with listlessness, or rejected with disdain. These cases show that different individuals require different treatment, in order to their being effectually stimulated to a serious concern about their salvation ; and, therefore, that both modes of persuasion should be employed. Both modes have been actually employed ; and it is impossible to ascertain how far the agency of terror has been a preparation for the agency of mercy in the one instance, or how far the agency of mercy has been a preparation for the agency of terror in the other. We cannot entertain a doubt, that it was their combined operation which finally, by the blessing of the Spirit, led the sinner to take refuge in the sanctuary of the Gospel—to cast himself into the arms of redeeming power—and to cleave to the appointed Saviour, as his all for time, and his all for eternity. And we are convinced that those teachers of religion act the wisest, the most faithful, and the most compassionate part, who neglect neither of these two engines of persuasion, in their addresses to the consciences and hearts of sinners ; but who say at one time, “ hear, and your souls shall live,” and at another time, “ every soul which shall not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people”—who not only give the exhortation of the apostle, “ Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out,” but also the warning of our Lord, “ Except ye repent, ye shall all perish”—who, while they affirm that “ he that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved,” have

the courage to add, “ he that believeth not shall be damned”—who having intimated, that when “ the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven,” he will “ come to be glorified in his saints, and admired of all them that believe,” do not omit to declare, that he will come “ in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel.”

But it may be said, that though there can be no objection to the terror of the Lord being proclaimed to the unbelieving and the profligate—though there may be an obvious necessity for sounding an “alarm to the unconverted”—there can be no propriety in urging such a topic on the attention of real and experienced Christians. And certainly these do not need to have it urged on them for the same purpose which it is intended to serve with those who are still “ in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.” But they should be at least forbearing, when they consider the pitiable case of their thoughtless and perishing fellow-mortals. They should not murmur that appropriate means of recovery are applied to souls, which are just as precious as theirs. They should be contented to hear occasionally what the Lord may bless to others, as he has already blessed it to them, for bringing them “from darkness to light, and from Satan unto God.” And a little consideration may convince them, that it may redound even to their own advantage to be sometimes called to meditate on the terror of the Lord. It will show them, in a clearer light, the value of that Gospel which has revealed to them the method of deliverance from guilt and misery. It will give them a more just and consistent view of the attributes of that God, whom they are required to fear as well as to love. It will fill them with a higher esteem for the character, and with a stronger faith in the merit, of that Saviour by whom their deliverance was effected, at such an expense of suffering and of blood. It will serve to keep them humble, by reminding them of the pit out of which

they have been digged, and the rock out of which they have been hewn--of the punishment which they deserved, and of the grace to which alone they were indebted for pardon. It will fasten such a revolting association upon sin, as to render it more and more an object of their hatred and of their avoidance. It will give more warmth, and more activity, to that compassion which they ought to feel for their brethren, who are yet the slaves of the world, of sin, and death, and whose case they might be apt to forget, or to remember but coldly, in the midst of their own privileges and their own safety. And it will raise to a more joyful and exalted strain that hymn of gratitude which they sing to the Redeemer of their souls, in this the house of their pilgrimage, and which shall be sung in a yet loftier mode, and with a yet holier rapture, by all the glorified saints in heaven, through everlasting ages.

Thus have we endeavoured to prepare the way for the unprejudiced perusal of Mr. Alleine's powerful and impressive work, "An Alarm to Unconverted Sinners," by vindicating that mode of persuading men, to which those have recourse who bring forward "the terror of the Lord." In this attempt, we trust that we have in a great measure succeeded. But it is fair to state, that Mr. Alleine's Treatise is not wholly occupied with his appeal to the fears of transgressors. A great part of it is taken up with the discussions of collateral topics--such as the nature of conversion, marks of conversion, directions for conversion, in which all are deeply interested ; and by our Author's treatment of which all may be edified.--The volume also contains a solution of several practical and important cases of conscience ; the satisfactory solution of which is well fitted to give light and direction in the difficulties and duties of the Christian life. We do not pretend to vouch for every one of his sentiments. There is occasionally something overcharged in his statements. And, as we did not approve of all

his modes of expression, we have endeavoured to expunge whatever was vulgar and offensive in his language, and render it more acceptable to the cultivated taste, without impairing, in any degree, the force of his expressions, or diluting the strength, and energy, and faithfulness of his addresses to sinners. Altogether, it is the production of a mind deeply impressed with the importance of its subject, unusually conversant in the doctrine and phraseology of Scripture, more studious to affect the heart than to please the taste of the reader, vigorous in its conceptions of evangelical truth, and in its powers of moral suasion, and well calculated, under God, to "turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just." Richard Baxter gives it a great testimony, when he calls it "a masculine birth," and says that he "takes it for an honour to commend it to the world." It has been much read--it has proved singularly useful--and we hope that it will continue to be an instrument of much substantial good to the church and to the world.

A. T.

EDINBURGH, May, 1823.

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do more than others ?

CASE II. What may and must a Christian be  
and do, that he may please God ?

CASE III. Is any man able, in this life, to come  
up to the example of Christ in this, to do always  
those things that please God ?

CASE IV. What weariness in, and unwillingness  
to, duties may stand with grace, and what not ?

AN EPISTLE  
TO THE  
UNCONVERTED READER.

*To all the ignorant, carnal, and ungodly, “ who are lovers of pleasure more than God, and seek this world more than the life everlasting, and live after the flesh and not after the Spirit, these calls and counsels are directed, in hope of their conversion to God, and of their salvation,*

“ He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear.”

MISERABLE SOUL !

THERE is that life, and light, and love, in every “ true believer,” but especially in every faithful Minister of Christ, which engageth them to long and labour for your salvation. Life is communicative and active ; it maketh us sensible that faith is not a fantasy, nor true religion a stage play, nor our hopes of eternal happiness a dream. And, as we desire nothing more for ourselves than to have more of the holy life, which we have, alas ! in so small a measure, so what is it we should more desire for others ? With the eye of an infallible, though too weak, faith, we see the heaven which you neglect, and the blessed souls in glory with Christ, whose companions you might be for ever. We see the multitudes of souls in hell, who came thither in the same way that you are going, who are shut out of the glorious presence of God, and who are now among those devils that deceived them, remembering that they had their “ good things” here, and how they spent the day of their visitation, and how light they once set by God, by Christ, by heaven,

by mercy, whilst mercy was an earnest solicitor for their hearts : and, with our bodily eyes, we see at the same time abundance of poor sinners living about us, as if there were no God, no Christ, no heaven, no hell, no judgment, no, nor any death to be expected ; as if a man were but a master-beast to rule the rest, and feed upon and perish with them. And, if it were your own case, to see what souls do in heaven and hell, and at once to see how unbelievably, carelessly, and senselessly most men live on earth, as if there were no such difference in another world, would it not seem a pitiful sight to you ? If you had once seen the five brethren of Dives on earth, eating, drinking, laughing and merry, clothed, and faring daily with the best, and at the same time seen their brother’s soul in hell, begging in vain for a little ease, and wishing that one from the dead might go warn them, that they come not to that place of torment, would it not seem to you a pitiful sight ? Would not pity have made you think, “ Is there no way to open these gentlemen’s eyes ?—no way to acquaint them what is become of their brother, and where Lazarus is, and whither they themselves are going ? No one driveth or forceth them into hell, and will they go thither of themselves ? And is there no way to stop them or keep them back ?” Did you yourselves but see what we (believing God) see by faith, and at once behold the saints in heaven, the lost despairing souls in hell, and the senseless sensual sinners on earth, that yet will lay none of this to heart, surely it would make you wonder at the stupidity of mankind. Would you not say, O what a deceiver is the devil, that can thus lead on souls to their own destruction ! O what a cheat is this transitory world, that can make men “ so forget the world” where they must live for ever ! O what an enemy is the flesh, that thus draweth down men’s souls from God ! What a bedlam is this wicked world, where thousands are so busy, labouring to undo themselves and others, and gratifying the devil, against their God and Saviour, who would give them

everlasting blessed life !

And, as we have such a sight as this, by faith, to make us pity, so we have so much taste of the goodness of God, the sweetness of his ways, and the happiness of believers, as must needs make us wish that you had but once tried the same delights ; it would turn the pleasure of sin into detestation. God knows, we desire nothing more for ourselves than the perfection and eternity of this holiness and happiness which we believe and taste. And should we not desire the same for you ?

And, being thus moved with necessary pity, we ask of God what he would have us to do for your salvation. And he hath told us in Scripture, That the preaching of his gospel to acquaint you plainly with the truth, and earnestly and frequently entreat you to turn from the flesh and the world to God, by Jesus Christ, is the means with which his grace is ready to concur for your salvation, when obstinate resistance causeth the Holy Spirit to forsake the sinner, and leave him to himself to pursue his own counsels, lusts, and will.

In this hope we undertook the sacred ministry, and gave up ourselves to this great and most important work. In the great sense of our own unworthiness, but yet in a sense of our soul's necessity, we were not such fools, at our first setting out, as not to know it must be a life of labour, self-denial, and patience, and that the devil would do his worst to hinder us, that all his instruments would be ready to serve him against our labours, and against your souls, Christ, our Captain, saved by patient conquest, and so must we save ourselves and you ; and so must you save yourselves under Christ, if ever you be saved. It was no strange thing to Paul, that bonds and afflictions did every where attend him ; nor did he " account his life dear, that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry committed to him by the Lord." It was no strange thing to him to be forbidden to preach to the " Gentiles, that they might be saved," by

such as were " filling up the measure of their sins," and were under God's " utmost wrath" on earth. Devils and Pharisees, and most of those among whom they came, both high and low, were against the Apostles preaching the gospel, and yet they would not sacrilegiously and cruelly break their covenant with Christ, and perfidiously desert the souls of men ; even as their Lord, for the love of souls, did call Peter Satan, that would have tempted him to save his life, instead of making it a sacrifice for our sins.

What, think you, should make us undertake a calling so contrary to our carnal ease and interest ? Do we not know the way of ease and honour, wealth and pleasure, as well as others ? And have we not flesh as well as others ? Could we not be content that the cup of reproach, scorn, slander, poverty, and labour, might pass from us, if it were not for the will of God your salvation ? Why should we love to be the lowest, and trodden down by malignant pride, and counted as the off-scouring of all things, and represented to rulers, whom we honour, as schismatics, disobedient, turbulent, unruly, by every church-usurper of whom we refuse to make a god ? Why give we not over this preaching of the gospel at the will of Satan, who is for the everlasting " suffering of your souls," under pretence of making us suffer ? Is not all this that you may be converted and saved ? If we be herein beside ourselves, it is for you. Could the words of the ignorant or proud have persuaded us, that either your wants or dangers are so inconsiderable, (or your other supplies and helps sufficient), that our labours had been unnecessary to you, God knoweth, we should readily have obeyed the " silencing sort of pastors," and have betaken us to some other land, where our service had been more necessary. Let shame be the hypocrite's reward, who takes not the saving of souls and the pleasing of God for a sufficient reward, without ecclesiastical dignities, preferments, or worldly wealth.

I have told you our motives, I have told you our

business, and the terms of our undertaking. It is God and you sinners that next must tell us, what our entertainment and success shall be. Shall it still be neglect and unthankful contempt, and turning away your ears and hearts, and saying, “ We have somewhat else to mind ? ” Will you still be cheated by this deceitful world, and spend all your days in providing for the flesh, that must shortly be rotting in a grave ? Were you made for no better use than this ? May we not bring you to some sober thoughts of your condition, and seriously to think one hour whither you are going ? What ! not one awakened look into the world where you must be for ever ; not one heart-piercing thought of everlasting glory ; not one heart-piercing thought of your Saviour’s love ; not one tear for all your sinful lives ! O, God forbid ! Let not our labours be so despised. Let not your God, your Saviour, and your souls, be so light set by : O let there be no more profane persons among you, like Esau, who “ for one morsel sold his birth-right ! ”

Poor sinners ! we talk not to you as on a stage, in customary words, and as if talking were our business ; we are in as good earnest with you as if we saw you murdering yourselves, and were persuading you to save yourselves. Can any man be in jest with you, who believeth God, who by faith foreseeeth whither you are going, and what you lose, and where the game of sin will end ? It is little better to jest with you now in a pulpit, or in private, than to stand jesting over your departing souls, when at death you are breathing out your last.

Alas ! with shame and grief we confess, we never speak to you of these things as their truth and weight deserve, nor with the skill and wisdom, the affection and fervency, that beseech men engaged in the saving of souls ; but yet you may perceive that we are in earnest with you, for God is so. What else do we study for, labour for, suffer for, live for ? Why else do we so much trouble ourselves, and trouble you, and anger them that would have made us silent ? For my

own part, I will make my free confession to you, to my shame, that I never grow cold, and dull, and pitiless, to the souls of others, till I first grow too cold and careless of my own (unless when weakness or speculative studies cool me, which I must confess they often do). We never cease pitying you, till we are growing too like you, and oft have need of pity ourselves.

When, through the mercy of my Lord, the prospect of the world of souls, to which I am going, hath any powerful operation on myself, O ! then I could spend and be spent for others. No words are too earnest, no labour too great, no cost too dear ; the frowns and wrath of malignant opposers of the preaching” of Christ’s gospel are nothing to me. But, when the world of spirits disappears, or my soul is clouded, and receiveth not the vital-illuminating influences of heaven, “ I grow cold, first to myself, and then to others.”

Come, then, poor sinners, and help us, who are willing at any time to help you. As we first crave God’s help, so we next crave yours. Help us ; for we cannot serve you against your wills, nor save you without your consent and help. God himself will not save you without you, and how shall we ? We know that the devil is against us, and will do his utmost to hinder us, and so will all his ministers, by what names or titles soever dignified or distinguished. But all this is nothing, if you will but take our parts ; I mean, if you will take Christ’s part and your own, and will not be against yourselves. Men and devils cannot either help or hinder us in saving you, as you may do yourselves : “ If God and you be for us, who shall be against us ? ”

And “ will you help us ? ” Give over striving against God and conscience ; give over fighting against Christ and his Spirit ; take part no more with the world and the flesh, which in your baptism you renounced ; set your hearts on the message, which we bring ; allow it your manlike, sober thought ; search the Scriptures, and see whether the things

we speak of be so or not. We offer you nothing but what we have resolvedly chosen ourselves, and that after the most serious deliberation we can make. We have many times looked round about us, to know what is the happiness of man ; and had we found better for ourselves, we had offered better to you. If the world would have served our turns, it would have served yours also, and we would not have troubled you with the talk of “ another world ;” but it will not, I am sure it will not, serve your turns and make you happy, nor shall you long make that self-deceiving shift with it as now ye do.

But, if ye will not think of these things, if ye will not use the reason of men, alas ! what can we do to save your souls ? O pity them, Lord, that they may pity themselves ; have mercy on them, that they may have some mercy on themselves ; help them, that they may help themselves and us. If you still refuse, will not your loss be more than ours ? If we lose our labour, (which to ourselves we shall not), if we lose our hopes of your salvation, what is this to your everlasting loss of salvation itself ? And what are our sufferings for your sake, in comparison of your endless sufferings ?

But, O ! it is this that breaketh our hearts, that we leave you under more guilt than we found you ; and, when we have spent our life and labour to save you, the impenitent souls must have their punishment increased for refusing these calls ; and that it will be part of your hell to think for ever how madly you refused our counsel, and what pains, cost, and patience, were used to have saved you, and all in vain. It will be so, it must needs be so. Christ saith, “ It shall be easier for Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment,” than for the rejecters of his gospel-calls. The nature of the thing, and the nature of justice, certainly inform you it must be so.

O turn not our complaints to God against you ! turn us not from beseeching you to be reconciled to God, to tell

him you will not be reconciled ; force us not to say, “ that we earnestly invited you to the heavenly feast, and you would not come !” force us not to bear this witness against you : “ Lord, we could have borne all our labour and sufferings for them much easier, if they would but have yielded to thy grace. But it was they themselves that broke our hearts, that lost our labour, that made us preach and entreat in vain : it was easier to preach without maintenance than without success. It was they that were worse to us than all the persecutors in the world. How oft would we have gathered them, but they would not, and are ungathered still !” How many holy, faithful ministers have I known, these eleven years past, who have lived in pining poverty and want, and hardly by charity got bread and clothing ; and yet, if they could but have truly said, “ Lord, the sermons which I preach privately, and in danger, have won many souls to thee,” it would have made their burden easy. But I tell thee, senseless and impenitent sinner, thou deniest God in thy heart ; and thou, that deniest them thy conversion, which was the end of all their labours, hast dealt much more cruelly with them than they that denied the Levites bread.

Poor sinners ! I know that I am speaking all this to those that are “ dead in sin ;” but it is a “ death consisting” with a “ natural life,” which hath a “ capacity of spiritual life,” or else I would no more speak to you than to a stone. And I know that you are blind to sin ;” but it is a blindness consisting with a reasonable faculty, which is capable of spiritual illumination, or else I would no more persuade you than I do a beast. . . And I know that you are in the fetters of “ your own lusts :” your wills, your love, your hearts, are turned away from God, and strongly bewitched with the dreams and dalliances of the flesh and world ; but your wills are not forced into this captivity : surely those wills may be changed, by God’s grace, when you clearly see sufficient reason to change them ; else I would as soon preach, were

I capable, to “ devils and damned souls.” Your case is not yet desperate ; O make it not desperate ! There is just the same hope of your salvation as there is of your conversion and perseverance, and no more. Without it there is no hope ; and with it you are safe, and have no cause to doubt and fear. Heaven may yet be yours if you will. Nothing but your own wills, refusing Christ and a holy life, can keep you out : and shalt thou do it ? shall hell be your own choice ? and will you say you will not be saved ?

O think better what you do ! God’s terms are reasonable ; his words and ways are good and equal ; Christ’s “ yoke is easy, and his burden light,” and his commands are not grievous to any, but so far as blindness and a bad heart make them so. You have no true reason to be unwilling : God and conscience shall one day tell you, and all the world, that you have no reason for it. You may as wisely pretend reason to torment yourselves, as plead reason against a true conversion unto God. Were I persuading you not to kill yourselves, I would make no question but you would be persuaded ; and yet must I be hopeless when I persuade you from everlasting misery, and not to prefer the world and flesh “ before your Saviour and your God,” and before a sure everlasting joy : God forbid !

Reader, I take it for a great mercy of God, that, before my head lies down in the dust, and I go to give up my account unto my Judge, I have this opportunity once more earnestly to bespeak thee for thy own salvation. I beg it of thee, as one that must shortly be called away and speak to thee no more till we come into our endless state, that thou wouldst but sometimes retire into thyself, and use the reason of a man, and look before thee whither thou art going, and look behind thee how thou hast lived, and what thou hast been doing in the world till now ; and look within thee, what a case thy soul is in, and whether it be fit to enter upon eternity ; and look above thee, what a heaven of glory thou dost neglect, and that thou hast God to be thine

everlasting friend or enemy, as thou choosest and as thou livest, and that thou art always in his sight : Yea, and look below thee, and think where they are that die unconverted. And, when thou hast soberly thought of these things, then do as God and true reason shall direct thee. And is this an unreasonable request ? I appeal to God, and to all wise men, and to thy own conscience, when it shall be awakened, if I speak against thee, or if all this be not for thy good ; but, if it be not true and sure, then regard not what I say ; if I speak not that message which God hath commanded his ministers to speak, then let it be refused as contemptuously as thou wilt. But, if I do but, in Christ’s name and stead, “ beseech thee to be reconciled to God,” refuse it at thy peril. And, if God’s beseeching thee shall not prevail against thy sloth, against the desires of the flesh, against the dust and shadows of the world, remember it, when, with fruitless cries and horror, thou art beseeching him too late.

I know, poor sinner, that lust and appetite have no reason ; but I know thou hast reason thyself, which was given thee to overrule them ; and that he that will not be a man, cannot be a saint nor happy man. I know thou livest in a tempting and wicked world, where things and persons will be daily hindering thee : but I know that this is no more to a man that by faith sees heaven and hell before him, than a grain of sand to a kingdom, or a blast of wind to one that is fighting or flying for his life. O that thou didst but know the difference between that which the devil and sin will give thee, if thou wilt sell thy soul and heaven, and that which God hath promised and sworn to give thee, if thou wilt heartily give up thyself to him ! I know thou mayest possibly fall into company, at least among some sots and drunkards, that will tell thee, “ All this is but troublesome preciseness, and making more ado than needs ;” but I know withal what that man deserveth, who will believe a fool before his Maker ! for he can be no better than a miserable fool that will contradict and revile the word of God, even



the word of grace that would save men's souls.

And, alas ! it is possible thou mayest hear some of the tribe of Levi, or rather of Cain, deriding this serious godliness as mere hypocrisy, and fanaticism, and self-conceit ; as if you must be no better than the devil's slaves, lest you be proud in thinking, that you are better than they ; that is, you must go with them to hell, lest in heaven ye be proud hypocrites, for thinking yourselves happier than they.

It may be, they will tell you, that this talk of conversion is fitter for pagans and infidels to hear than for Christians and Protestants. But I will entreat thee, as before God, to answer these following questions, or to get them answered, and then judge whether it be they or we that would deceive thee ; and whether as men use to talk against learning that have none themselves, such men prate against conversion and the " Spirit of God," because they have no such thing themselves.

Q. 1. I pray ask them whether it be a puritan or fanatic opinion that men must die ; and what all the pomp, wealth, and pleasure of the world will signify to a departing soul ? Ask them, whether they will live on earth for ever, and their merry hours and lordly looks will have no end ; and whether it be but the conceit of " hypocrites and schismatics," that their carcass must be rotting in a " darksome grave ?"

Q. 2. Ask them, whether they have not an immortal soul ? and a longer life to live when this is ended ?

Q. 3. Ask them, whether reason requires not every man to think more seriously of the place or state where he must be for ever, than of that where he must be for a little while, and whence he is posting day and night : and whether it be not wiser to lay up our treasure where we must stay, than where we must not stay, but daily look to be called away, and never more to be seen on earth ?

Q. 4. Ask them, whether God should not be " loved with all your heart, and soul, and might ;" and whether it be

not the mark of an ungodly miscreant to be " a lover of pleasure more than God," and a lover of this world above him, and whether we must not seek " first God's kingdom and his righteousness," and " labour most for the meat that never perisheth," and " strive to enter in at the strait gate," and " give all diligence to make our calling and election sure ?"

Q. 5. Ask them, whether, without holiness, any shall see God, and whether the carnal mind is not enmity to God, and " to be spiritually minded is life and peace ;" and whether, " if you live after the flesh," you shall not die and be condemned, and they shall not live and be saved " that walk after the Spirit ;" and whether any man be Christ's that hath not his Spirit ?

Q. 6. Ask them, whether any man hath " treasure in heaven" whose heart is not there ; and whether this be not the difference between the wicked and the godly--that the first make " their bellies their god, and mind earthly things ?" and are " enemies to the cross of Christ" (though perhaps not to his name) ; and the latter have " their conversation in heaven," and, " being risen with Christ, do set their affections on things above, and not on things that are on the earth," to which they are as dead, " and their life is hid" (or out of sight) " with Christ in God, till Christ shall appear, and then they shall appear (even openly to all the world) with him in glory ?"

Q. 7. Ask them whether it be credible or suitable to God's word or working, that he, that will not give the fruits of the earth without their labour, nor feed and clothe them without themselves, will yet bring them to heaven without any care, desire, or labour of their own, when he hath bid them not care for the one, and called for the greatest diligence in the other? Yea, ask them, whether these be not the two first articles of all faith and religion, 1. " That God is ?" 2. That " he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him ?"

Q. 8. Ask them, yea, ask your eyes, your ears, your daily experience in the world, whether all or most that call themselves Christians, do in good earnest thus live to God in the Spirit, and “mortify the flesh with its affections and lusts, and seek first God’s kingdom and righteousness,” love him above all, and lay up their treasure and heart in heaven ; or rather, whether most be not lovers of the world, and “lovers of pleasure more than God,” and live not to the flesh, and mind not most the things of the flesh ? I mention not now the drunkards, the men, that live in pride, fulness, and idleness, and sport and trifle away their precious time ; nor the filthy fornicator, nor the merciless oppressor, nor the malignant hater of a godly life, nor the perjured betrayers of men’s souls, and the gospel, or of their country’s good, nor such other men of seared consciences, whose misery none, but such as are blind and miserable, questions ; it is not those only I am speaking of, but the common, worldly, fleshly, and ungodly ones.

Q. 9. Ask them, whether the name of a Christian will save any of these ungodly ones : and whether God will like men the better for lying, and calling themselves Christians, when indeed they are not ? And, whether they dare preach to the people, that a Christian drunkard, or Christian fornicator, or Christian oppressor, or Christian worldling, needeth no conversion ?

Q. 10. Ask them, whether they say not themselves that hypocrisy is a great aggravation to all other sins ? And, whether God hath not made the hypocrites and unbelievers to be standards in hell ? And, whether seeking to amuse God by a mock religion, doth make such false Christians better than the poor heathens and infidels, or much worse ? And, whether he be not a hypocrite, that professeth to be a Christian and a servant of God, when he is not, nor will be ? And, whether he that “knoweth his master’s will, and doeth it not,” shall not have the sorest stripes or punishment ?

Q. 11. Ask them, whether in their baptism, they did not renounce the flesh, the world, and the devil, and vow and deliver up themselves to God their Father, their Saviour, and their Sanctifier ? And, whether all or most men perform this vow ? And, whether a perjured “covenant-breaker” against God, is fitter for salvation than he that never was baptized ?

Q. 12. Ask them, whether the holy nature of God be not so contrary to sin, as that it is blasphemy to say that he will bring to heaven, and into the bosom of his eternal delights, an unholy and unrenewed soul ?

Q. 13. Ask them, why it was that Christ came into the world ; whether it was not “to save his people from their sins,” and “to destroy the works of the devil,” and to “purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works,” and to bring home strayed souls to God, and to be “the way to the Father ?” And whether Christ will save that soul that is not converted by him, and cleansed from his sins ? Or whether it be the dead image only of a crucified Jesus that is all their Saviour, while they will have no more of him ?

Q. 14. Ask them why they believe, and were baptised into, the Holy Ghost ? And, whether a man can enter into the kingdom of heaven that is not born of the Spirit as well as of water ? and that is not converted, and begins not the world as it were anew, in a teachable, tractable, newness of life, like a little child ? And whether it be not a certain truth, that “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his ?”

Q. 15. Ask them why Christ gave the world so many warnings of the damnable nature of the Pharisees’ hypocrisy, if hypocritical Christians may be saved ? And what were these Pharisees ? They were the masters of the Jewish church, the rabbis, that must have high places, high tithes, ceremonies, and formal garments, and must be revered of all ; that gave God lip-service, without the heart, and made void his commands, and worshipped him in

vain, “teaching for doctrine the commandments of men,” and strictly tithed mint and cummin, while love, mercy, and justice were passed by ; who worshipped God with abundance of ceremonies, and built the tombs, and “garnished the sepulchres of the saints,” while they killed and persecuted those that did imitate them, and hated the living saints, but honoured the dead : they were the bitterest enemies and murderers of Christ, on pretence that he was a blasphemer and a seditious enemy to Cæsar and the common peace, and one that spoke against the temples : they were the greatest enemies of the Apostles, and silencers of those that preached Christ’s gospel, and persecuted them that called upon his name. And had these no need of conversion because they could say, “God is our father,” (when the devil was their father), and that they were Abraham’s seed ? And are not “hypocritical Christians, drunken Christians, fornicating Christians, carnal worldly infidel Christians,” (the contradiction is your own), “persecuting Christians, false-named, hypocritical Christians,” as bad, yea worse, as they abuse a more excellent profession ?

Q. 16. Doth not the holy state of heaven require holiness in all that shall possess it ? Can an unholy soul there see, and love, and praise, and delight in God for ever, and in the holy society and employment of the saints ? Is he not more like a Mahometan than a Christian, that looketh for a sensual and unholy heaven ?

Q. 17. What is the difference between the church and the world ? Is not the church a holy society of regenerate souls ? Yea, the church visible is only those that in baptism vow holiness, and profess it. Look these hypocrites in the face, and see whether they do not blush when they repeat, in the creed, “I believe in the Holy Ghost, I believe in the holy Catholic church, and communion of saints,” who shall have the “forgiveness of sins, and life everlasting.” Ask them, whether they mean holy adulterers, holy worldlings,

holy perjured persons ? Ask them, whether they mean a communion of saints in a tavern, in a play-house, in a gaming-house, or a jesting, stage-play communion ? If the church be holy, be holy if you will be of the church. And make not the saints and their communion seem odious, either for their infirmities, or their opposition to your carnal interests or conceits.

Q. 18. Ask them, whether there be a heaven and a hell, or not ? If not, why are they pretended Christians ? If there be, will God send one man to heaven and another to hell, to so vast, so amazing, a difference of state, if there be no great difference between them here ? If holiness no more differenced Christians from others, than hearing a sermon or saying over a prayer doth difference one from an infidel, where were the justice of God in saving some and damning others ? And what were Christianity better than the religion of “Antonine, Plato, Socrates, Seneca, Cicero, Plutarch,” and others, if not much worse ? Go into London streets, and, when you have talked with living prudent men, then go to the painter’s shop, and see a comely picture ; and to the looking-glass, and see the appearance of each passenger in a glass, and you have something like the difference between a holy soul and a dead and dressed formal hypocrite.

Q. 19. Ask them whether kings, and all men, make not a difference between man and man ; the loyal and perfidious, the obedient and disobedient ? and whether they distinguish not themselves between a friend and a foe ; one that loveth them, and one that robbeth, hateth, or would kill them ? And shall not the more holy God make more difference between the righteous and the wicked ?

Q. 20. But, if they are dead in every point save carnal interest, ask them why they are preachers or priests ? and, if conversion and holiness be a needless thing, of what use they are themselves ? and why must the country be troubled with them, and pay them tithes, and owe them reverence ?

When these twenty questions are well answered, conclude you may be saved without conversion.

But if, poor soul, thou art fully convinced, and askest, “What shall I do to be converted ?” the Lord make thee willing, and save thee from hypocrisy, and I will quickly tell thee in a few words.

1. Give not over sober thinking of these things, till thy heart be changed.

2. Come to Christ, and take him for thy Saviour, thy teacher, thy king, and he will pardon all that is past, and save thee.

3. Believe God’s love, the pardon of sin, and the everlasting joys of heaven, that thou mayest feel that all the pleasures of the world are dross in comparison of the heavenly delight of faith, and hope and holy love, and peace of conscience, and sincere obedience.

4. “Sin no more wilfully,” but forbear that which thou mayest forbear.

5. Away from temptations, occasions of sin, and evil company, and be a companion of the humble, holy, heavenly and sincere.

6. Wait on God’s Spirit in the diligent and constant use of his own means. Read, hear, meditate, pray ; pray hard for that grace that must convert thee ; wait thus, and thou shalt not wait in vain.

Pity, O Lord, and persuade, the souls ! Let not Christ’s blood, his doctrine, his example, his Spirit, be lost unto them, and they lost for ever ! Let not heaven be as no heaven to them, while they dream and doat on the shadows in this world ! And, O ! save this land from the greater destruction than all our late plagues, and flames, and divisions, which our sins and thy threatenings make us fear ! O Lord, in thee have we trusted, let us never be confounded !

Having thus contributed my endeavours, in this preface, to the furtherance of the design of this “excellent book,”

I must tell thee, reader, that I take it for an honour to commend so masculine a birth unto the world. Who the author of this Treatise was, how he preached, how he died, his life and letters, lately printed, fully tell you ; and I earnestly recommend the reading of them to all, but especially to ministers, not to tell them what men have here been forbidden to preach Christ’s gospel, and for what, nor what men they are that so many years have done it ; but to tell you what men Christ’s minister’s should be. But say not, “he killed himself with excessive labour, therefore I will take warning and take my ease.” For, 1. He lived in perfect health all his days, notwithstanding all his labours, till after his long and hard imprisonment. 2. It was not the greatest labour of his times of liberty that hurt him, but his preaching, six, seven, or eight times in a week, after he was silenced, because he could not speak to all his people at once. O make not an ill use of so excellent an example ; say not, like Judas, “What needs this waste ?” His labour, his life, his suffering, his death, were not in vain. The ages to come, that read his life, and read his little popular Treatise, and his “Call to Archippus,” shall say they were not in vain. And, though he was cut off in the midst of his age, and his longer labours and more elaborate writings thus prevented, take thankfully this small but methodical, warm, and serious tract ; read it seriously, and it cannot be but that it must do thee good.

I am one that have looked into books, sciences, and speculations of many sorts, and seriously tell thee, as a dying man, that after all my searches, and experience, I have found, that philosophical inquiries into the divine artifices and the nature of things, have, among a great number of uncertainties, a great many pretty pleasant probabilities which a holy soul can make good use of in admiring God, and may find as a lawful kind of amusement ; but, in the moralities which Atheists count uncertainties, the knowledge of God and our duty, and our hopes, the

doctrine and practice of holiness, temperance, charity, and justice, and the diligent seeking and joyful hopes of life everlasting, are all the true wisdom, goodness, rest, and comfort of a soul. Whatever be the plea, this is the satisfying certainty, the business, and the beautifying improvement of our lives.

I have done, when I have sought to remove a little scandal, which I foresaw I should sustain, where himself and two of his friends, in writing the Preface to his Life, make such mention of my name, which I cannot own, because it would seem praising him for praising me. I confess it looketh ill in me, but I had not the power of other men's writings, and dared not therefore forbear that which was his due. Had I directed their pens, they should have taken a middle way, and only esteemed me a very unworthy servant of Christ, who yet longs to see the peace and prosperity of his church ; and I should have forgone their undeserved praise, as other men should have done their slanderous libels. But, if the reader get no harm by it, I assure him, the use I made of it was, to lament that I am really so much worse than they esteemed me ; and fear lest I should prove yet worse than I discern myself, who see so much sin and weakness in my betters, and much more in myself, as to make it the constant sentiment of my soul, that PRIDE OF MEN'S GREATNESS, WISDOM, and GOODNESS, is the first part of the DEVIL'S IMAGE on man's soul ; and DARKNESS is the second ; and MALIGNITY the third.

RICHARD BAXTER.

## AN EPISTLE

TO THE

## UNCONVERTED READER.

READER,

How well were it, if there were no more unconverted ones among us than those to whom this is directed ! Unconverted persons, how many are there ? but how few unconverted readers, especially of such books as this before thee ! A play or romance better suits the desires, and therefore must have more of the eye of such ; what will cherish the evil heart only is most grateful, not what will change it. How many are there, to whom this is directed, who will not know that these are the men ! And how little hope is there that this excellent Treatise should reach its end with those that apprehend themselves not concerned in it ! Art thou not one of them ? Art thou a convert, or art thou yet in thy sins ? What is sin ? What is conversion ? It may be thou canst tell me neither, and yet thou sayest a convert thou art. But to what purpose is it then likely to be for the servant of God to treat with thee about this matter ! Let him bid thee believe. Thou art a believer already ; let him bid thee repent and turn to the Lord. That work, thou sayest, is not to do now. What can there be said to this man that is likely to bring him to good ? Friend, know thyself better, or thou perishest without remedy. Thou mayest pray, but what hope is there in thy praying ? Thou mayest read, but what hope is there in thy reading ? Yet, read on ; this hope there is, in this book there is eye-salve that may heal thee of thy blindness. In this book there is a glass that

will show thee thy face. Dost thou know thy own face when thou seest it ? Behold thy very image in those marks that are given of an unconverted person; read and consider them, and then say if thou art not the man.

Be willing to know thyself, and to know the worst of thy case : wink not at the light ; hide not thyself from thine own soul. Wilt thou never know thy disease till it be past remedy ?

Much of our hardest work would be over, if we could see the sinners, to whom we are sent, to be convinced sinners. If we could but open the blind eyes, there were hopes we should shortly raise the dead.

Sinner, of a truth thou art in evil case, whether thou know it or not ; thou art among the dead, and there is but a step betwixt thee and hell. Thou wilt not believe it though it be told thee : yet once again, let me beseech thee, come to the glass that is here presented to thee, and narrowly observe whether the very marks of the dead be not found upon thee.

If there be miscarriages in this first work, if thou wilt not understand thy misery and thy danger, there is an end of all hopes concerning thee. Whilst self-ignorance abides upon thee, all the counsels, that are necessary to a man in thy case, will do thee no good ; they are never likely to prosper with thee. Who will be persuaded to do that which he believes is already done ? Who will take the counsel of the physician that doth not think himself sick ? The man of God may spare his pains of persuading thee to conversion, whilst thou art confident thou art converted already. Who will be at the pains of repentance, that concludes he hath already repented ? Who will be at the labour and pangs of the new birth, that is confident he is already “ passed from death unto life ?”

But, friend, let me reason a little with thee. Thou art confident it is well with thee, yet why wilt thou not yield to thus much at least, to put it to the question. Am I not

mistaken ? Thou art worse than mad if thou thinkest such a question may not be put. Dost thou not know that thy heart is false and deceitful ? Yet because it speaks good concerning thee, must it not be questioned whether it speaks true or not ? Be so wise as to conclude, “ I may be mistaken ;” and thus come to the trial whether thou art mistaken or not.

And if, upon trial, by the marks that are before thee, thou come to be undeceived, and see thyself wrapped up in that misery which hitherto thou wouldst not suspect, the next news I expect to hear from thee is, “ What shall I do to be saved ?” O, were it once come to that ! then thou hast an answer at hand, in those means thou wilt find prescribed thee. And, because they are such as thou wilt hardly be persuaded to use, take in the motives that follow, and they will help down the means ; consider both the one and the other ; and, if thou dost not find the means proper, and the motives weighty, I think I shall do thee no wrong, if I tell thee, thou art still of a blind mind, and a harder heart.

Friend, the matter which this little book comes to treat with thee about is of the highest importance ; it is a matter of life or death. If thou sayest, “ the terms upon which life is offered are hard,” consider, is it not harder to die ? He is worthy to die who will lose his soul to save his labour. If thou couldst step down into the deep, and see those damned souls, who are bound in everlasting chains of vengeance, and should ask them. Now what do you think of the terms upon which life was offered ? Now what think you of that repentance, of that obedience, of that circumspection, self-denial, and the greatest severity, which by the gospel were imposed upon you ? If you might once again have the same terms granted you for your redemption from this place of torment, would you yet say, hard terms ! let me rather die this death for ever, than live such a life. Shouldst thou ask them thus, that have felt what it is to be damned, what answer dost thou think they would make ? O

friend ! never again “ groan under the difficulties of conversion, till thou believe them to be worse than hell.” But I will no farther anticipate my worthy Author.

Nor is there much need I should commend either himself or his works : for the Author himself thou mayest at a small charge get acquainted with, in that history of his life and death which is extant, concerning which I shall only say.

*Sic mihi contingat vivere, sicque mori ;*

and for this work of his, what commendation I shall give of it would he needed no longer than till thou hast read it over : thou wilt find such wine in it as needs no bush. This only I shall say, as far as my credit will go, it is exceedingly well worth thy most serious perusal. O mayest thou hear that voice (such a voice from heaven there is, whether thou hear it or not), “ take up and read ;” read friend, and read over again, read and understand, understand and pray, pray and consider, and consent unto Him, who by the pen of his servant calls to thee from heaven, “ Why wilt thou die ? Turn and live.” O suffer this word of instruction and exhortation to open thy blind eyes, to turn thee from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God, that thou mayest receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified. When it is thus with thee, then pray for

Thy friend, and servant of thy soul,

RICHARD ALLEINE.

AN

# ALARM

TO

## UNCONVERTED SINNERS.

### INTRODUCTION.

AN EARNEST INVITATION TO SINNERS TO TURN  
TO GOD,  
IN ORDER TO THEIR ETERNAL SALVATION.

DEARLY beloved and longed for, I gladly acknowledge myself a debtor to you all, and am concerned, as I would be found a good steward to the household of God, to give to every one his portion. But the physician is most solicitous for those patients whose case is most doubtful and hazardous, and the father’s bowels are especially turned towards his dying child--the numbers of unconverted souls among you call for the most earnest compassion and hasty diligence to pluck them out of the burning, and therefore to these first I shall apply myself in these pages.

But whence shall I fetch my argument, or how shall I choose my words ? Lord, wherewith shall I win them ? O that I could but tell ! I would write unto them in tears, I would weep out every argument, I would petition them on my knees, verily, (were I able), I would. O how thankful would I be, if they would be prevailed with to repent and turn !

How long have I travailed in birth with you ? How frequently have I made suit to you ? How often would I have gathered you ? How instant have I been with you ? This is what I have prayed for, and studied for, many years, that I might bring you to God. O that I might but do it !

Will you yet be entreated ? O what a happy man might you yet make me, if ye would but hearken to me, and suffer me to bring you over to Jesus Christ !

But, Lord, how insufficient am I for this work ! I have been many a year pleading for thee, but they would not go with me : Lord, what a task hast thou set me to do ! Alas ! wherewith shall I pierce the scales of Leviathan, or make the heart to feel, that is hard as stone, hard as a piece of the nether mill-stone ? Shall I go and speak to the grave, and look when the dead shall obey me and come forth ? Shall I give the blind to see ? From the beginning of the world was it heard that a man opened the eyes of the blind ; but thou, O Lord, canst pierce the scales and prick the heart of the sinner : I can but draw the bow at a venture, but do thou direct the arrows between the joints of the harness, kill sin, and save the soul of the sinner that casts his eyes on these labours.

But I must address myself to you to whom I am sent ; yet I am at a great loss. Would to God I knew how to go to work with you ! Would I fore-go any labour ? God knoweth, you yourselves are my witnesses, how I have followed you in private as well as in public, and have brought the gospel to your doors, testifying to you the necessity of the new birth, and persuading you to look in time after a sound and thorough change. Beloved, I have not acted a part among you to serve my own advantage.

Our gospel is not yea and nay. Have you not heard the same truths from the pulpit, by public labours, by private letters, and by personal instructions ? Brethren, I am of the same mind as ever—that holiness is the best choice ; that there is no entering into heaven but by the new birth ; that “ without holiness you shall never see God.” Ah, my beloved, refresh my bowels in the Lord ! “ If there be any consolation in Christ, any comfort of love, any fellowship of the Spirit, any bowels of mercy, fulfil ye my joy.” Now give yourselves unto the Lord. Now set yourselves to seek

him. Now set up the Lord Jesus in your hearts, and set him up in your houses. Now come in and “ kiss the Son,” and accept the tenders of mercy, touch his sceptre and live ; why will ye die ? I beg not for myself, but fain I would have you happy : this is the prize I run for, and the object I aim at. My soul’s desire and prayer for you is, that you may be saved.

The famous Lycurgus having instituted most strict and wholesome laws for his people, told them he was necessitated to go a journey, and got them to bind themselves in an oath, that his laws should be observed till his return. This done, he went into a voluntary banishment, and never returned, that they might, by virtue of their oath, be engaged to the perpetual observation of his laws. Methinks I should be glad of the hard condition which he endured, (though I love you tenderly), so I might but thereby engage you thoroughly to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Dearly beloved, would you rejoice the heart of your minister ? why then, embrace the counsels of the Lord, by me. Forego your sins ; turn to prayer ; set up the worship of God in your families ; keep at a distance from the corruption of the times. What greater joy, to a minister, than to hear of souls born unto Christ by him, “ and his children walk in the truth ?”

Brethren, I beseech you, suffer friendly plainness and freedom with you in your deepest concerns. I am not playing the orator, to make a learned speech to you ; these lines are upon a weighty errand indeed, that is, to convince, to convert, and to save you. My work is not to please you, but to save you : nor is my business with your fancies, but your hearts : if I have not your hearts, I have nothing. If I were to please your ears, I would sing another song : if I were to preach myself, I would steer another course ; I would then tell you a smoother tale, and speak peace to you ; for how can Ahab love his Micaiah “ that always prophesies evil concerning him ?” But how much better are



the wounds of a friend than the fair speeches of a harlot, who flattereth with her lips “till the dart strike through the liver,” and “hunteth for the precious life?” If I were to quiet a crying infant, I might sing him a pleasant song, and rock him asleep : but, when the child is fallen into the fire, the parent takes another course ; he will not go to still him with a song or a trifle. I know, if we speed not with you, you are lost ; if we cannot get your consent to “arise and come away,” you perish for ever : no conversion, and no salvation : I must get your good will, or leave you miserable.

But here the difficulty of my work again recurs : “ ‘ Lord, choose my stones out of the rock ;’ I come in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel. I come forth, like the stripling David, to ‘wrestle, not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers, and rulers of the darkness of this world.’ This day let the Lord smite the Philistine, and spoil the strong man of his armour, and give me to deliver the captives out of his hand : Lord, choose my words, choose my weapons for me; and when I put my hand into the bag, and take thence a stone and sling it, do thou carry it to the mark, and make it sink, not into the forehead, but the heart of the unconverted sinner, and smite him to the ground. Thou hast sent me, as Abraham did Eleazer, to ‘take a wife unto my master thy son,’ but my discouraged soul is ready to fear the woman will not be willing to follow me. O Lord God of my master, I pray thee send me good speed this day, and show kindness to my master, and send thine angel before me, and prosper my way, that I may take a wife unto thy son : that as thy servant rested not till he had brought Isaac and Rebecca together, so I may be successful to bring Christ and the souls of my people together before we part.”

But I turn me unto you. Some of you do not know what I mean by conversion, and in vain shall I persuade you to that which you do not understand ; and, therefore, for your sakes, I shall show, “ what this conversion is.” Others

cherish secret hopes of mercy, though they continue as they are ; and for them I must show the “ necessity of conversion.” Others harden themselves with a vain conceit that they are converted already, unto them I must show the “ marks of the unconverted.” Others, because they feel no harm, fear none, and so sleep upon the top of the mast ; to them I shall show “ the misery of the unconverted.” Others sit still, because they see not their way ; to them I shall show the “ means of conversion.” And, finally, for the quickening of all, I shall close with the “ motives to conversion.”

## CHAPTER I.

*Showing, in the negative, what Conversion is not, and correcting some mistakes about it.*

LET the blind Samaritans “ worship they know not what.” Let the heathen Athenians inscribe their altar “ unto the unknown God.” Let the guileful Papists commend the mother of destruction for the mother of devotion ; they that know man’s constitution, and the nature of the reasonable soul’s operation, cannot but know that, the understanding having the empire in the soul, he that will go rationally to work, must labour to let in the light here. And, therefore, that you may not mistake me, I shall show you what I mean by the conversion I persuade you to endeavour after.

It is storied that, when Jupiter let down the golden chaplets from heaven, all but one were stolen, upon which, lest they should lose a relic of so great esteem, they made five others so like it, that, if any were so wickedly minded as to steal that also, they should not be able to discern which was it. And truly, my beloved, the devil hath made many

counterfeits of this conversion, and cheats one with this, and another with that ; and such craft and artifice he hath in his mystery of deceits, that, if it were possible, he would deceive the very elect. Now, that I may cure the fatal mistake of some, who think they are converted when they are not, as well as remove the troubles and fears of others, that think they are not converted when they are, I shall

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1. It is not the taking upon us the profession of Christianity. Doubtless Christianity is more than a name. If we will hear Paul, it lies “not in word, but in power.” If to cease to be Jews and Pagans, and to put on the Christian profession, had been true conversion, (as this is all that some would have to be understood by it), who were better Christians than they of Sardis and Laodicea ? These were all Christians by profession, and had a name to live ; but because they had but a name, are condemned by Christ. Are there not many that mention the name of the Lord Jesus, that yet “depart not from iniquity,” and “profess they know God, but in works they deny him ?” And will God receive these for true converts, because turned to the Christian religion ? What ! converts from sin, when yet they live in sin ! It is a visible contradiction. Surely, if the lamp of profession would have served the turn, the foolish virgins had never been shut out. We find not only professors, but preachers of Christ and wonder-workers, turned off because evil-workers.

2. It is not being washed in the laver of regeneration, or putting on the badge of Christ in baptism. Many wear the livery of Christ, and yet never stand to their colours, nor follow their leader. Ananias and Sapphira, and Magus were baptized as well as the rest. How fondly do many mistake here, deceiving and being deceived ! dreaming that effectual grace is necessarily connected with the external administration of baptism, (which is but to revive the Popish tenet of the sacraments working grace), and so every infant

shall be regenerated, not only sacramentally, but really and properly. Hence men do fancy, that, being regenerated already when baptized, they need no farther change.

But, if this were so, then all that were baptized in their infancy must necessarily be saved, because the promise of pardon and salvation is made to conversion and regeneration.

Our calling, sanctification, (as to the beginning of it), or conversion, (which are but the same things under different conceptions and expressions), is but a middle link in the golden chain, fastened to election at one end, and glorification at the other ; “ For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate ; and whom he did predestinate, them he also called ; and whom he called, them he also justified ; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” The silver cord cannot be broken, nor the connection between sanctification and salvation, between grace and glory, impiously violated. If we were indeed begotten again, it is “ to an inheritance incorruptible, reserved in heaven for us,” and the divine power is engaged to keep us for it. And, if the very regenerate may perish at last in their sins, we will no more say, that “ he that is born of God, his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin,” (that is, unto death), nor that it is impossible to “ deceive the very elect.”

And, indeed, were this true, then we need look no farther to see our names written in heaven, than only to search the register, and see whether we were baptized : then I would keep the certificate of my baptism as my fairest evidence for heaven, and should come by assurance of my gracious state by the minister wetting my face with his finger : then men should do well to carry but a certificate of their baptism, under the register’s hand, when they died, (as the philosopher wished to be buried with the bishop’s bond in his hand, which he had given him for receiving his alms in another world), and, upon sight of this, there were no doubt of their admission into heaven.

In short, if there be no more necessary to conversion, or regeneration, than to profess the Christian religion, or to be baptized in infancy, this will be directly opposed to that Scripture, Matt. vii. 14., as well as multitudes of others : For, first, we will then no more say, “ strait is the gate, and narrow is the way :” for, if all that were baptized, and are of the true religion, are saved, the door is become exceedingly wide, and we will henceforth say, “ wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth unto life :” for, if this be true, whole parishes, yea, whole counties, and whole kingdoms, may go in abreast ; and we will no more teach, that the righteous is scarcely saved, or that there is need of taking the kingdom of heaven by violence, and striving to enter in. Surely, if the way be so easy as many take it, that there is little more necessary than to be regenerated in our baptism, and cry “ God have mercy,” and be absolved by the minister at our end, it is unnecessary to put ourselves to such running, and seeking, and knocking, and fighting, and wrestling as the word requires as necessary to salvation. Secondly, if this be true, we will no more say, “ few there be that find it ;” yea, we will rather say, “ few there be that miss it :” we will no more say, that, of the many that are “ called, but few are chosen,” and that even of the professing “ Israel but a remnant shall be saved.” If this doctrine be true, we will not say any more, with the disciples, “ Who then shall be saved ?” but rather, Who then shall not be saved ? Then, if a man be called a brother, (that is, a Christian), and be baptized, though he be a fornicator, or a railer, or covetous, or a drunkard, yet he shall “ inherit the kingdom of God.”

But the Arminian will reply. Such as these, though they did receive regenerating grace in baptism, are since fallen away, and must be renewed again, or else they cannot be saved.

I answer, 1. That there is an infallible connection between regeneration and salvation, as we have already

shown. 2. Then men must be born again a second time ; which carries a great deal of absurdity in its very face : and why may not men be twice born in nature as well as in grace ? But, 3. And above all, this grants, however, the thing I contend for, that, whatever men do or pretend to receive in baptism, if they be found afterwards to be grossly ignorant, or profane, or formal, without the power of godliness, they “ must be born again,” or else be shut out of the kingdom of God. So then they must have more to plead for themselves than their baptismal regeneration.

Well, in this you see all are agreed, that, be it more or less that is received in baptism, (if when men come to years), they are evidently unsanctified, they must be renewed again by a thorough and powerful change, or else they cannot escape the damnation of hell. Friends and brethren, “ be not deceived ;” “ God is not mocked.” Whether it be your baptism, or whatever else that you pretend, I tell you, from the living God, that if any of you be prayerless persons, or unclean, or malicious, or covetous, or riotous, or a scoffer, or a lover of evil company, in a word, if you are not holy, strict, and self-denying Christians, you cannot be saved, except you be transformed by a farther work upon you, and renewed again by repentance.

Thus I have shown, that it is not enough to evidence a man to be regenerate, that he hath been baptized ; effectual grace not necessarily accompanying baptism, as some have vainly asserted. But I must answer one objection before I proceed.

*Objection.* The sacraments do certainly attain their ends, where man doth not lay some obstruction ; which infants do not.

*Solution.* I answer, it is not the end of baptism to regenerate. 1. Because then there would be no reason why it should be confined only to the seed of believers ; for both the law of God and the nature of charity require us to use the means of conversion for all, as far as we can have

opportunity. Were this true, no charity so great as to catch the children of Turks and Heathens, and baptize them, and so despatch them to heaven out of hand : like the bloody-wretches that made the poor Protestants, to save their lives, swear they would come to mass, and that they would never depart from it, and then put them forthwith to death, saying, “ They would hang them while in a good mind.” 2. Because it pre-supposes regeneration, and therefore cannot be intended to confer it. In all the express instances in Scripture, we find that baptism doth suppose their repenting, believing, receiving the Holy Ghost, Acts viii. 37. and ii. 38. and x. 47. Mark xvi. 16. And it were no small absurdity to imagine that baptism was instituted for an end, of which not one of the first subjects was capable, for they were all adult persons, and supposed to have faith and repentance according as they professed, and their children were not baptized till after them in their right. Were this doctrine true, baptism would make disciples ; but we find it doth bespeak them such before-hand. 3. Because baptism, being but a seal of the covenant, cannot convey the benefits, but according to the tenor of the covenant to which it is set.

Now the covenant is conditional ; therefore the seals convey conditionally. The covenant requires faith and repentance, as the conditions of the grand benefits, “ pardon and life ;” and what the covenant doth not convey but upon these conditions, the seal cannot : so that baptism doth presuppose faith and repentance in the subject, without which it neither doth nor can convey the saving benefits : otherwise the seal should convey contrary to the tenor of the covenant to which it is affixed.

3. It lies not in a moral righteousness. This exceeds not “ the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees,” and therefore cannot bring us to the kingdom of God. Paul, while unconverted, “ touching the righteousness which is in the law, was blameless.” The selfjusticiary could say, “ I am

no extortioner, adulterer, unjust," &c. Thou must have something more than all this to show, or else, however thou mayest justify thyself, God will condemn thee. I condemn not morality, but warn you not to rest here : piety includes morality, as Christianity doth humanity, and grace reason ; but we must not divide the tables.

4. It consists not in an external conformity to the rules of piety. It is too manifest men may have a " form of godliness, without the power." Men may pray long, and fast often, and hear gladly, and be very forward in the service of God, though costly and expensive, and yet be strangers to conversion. They must have more to plead for themselves, than that they keep their church, give alms, and make use of prayer, to prove themselves sound converts. There is no outward service, but a hypocrite may do, even to the " giving all his goods to feed the poor, and his members to the fire."

5. It lies not in the restraining of corruption by education, human laws, or the force of incumbent affliction. It is too common and easy to mistake education for grace ; but, if this were enough, who was a better man than Jehoshaphat ? While Jehoiadab, his uncle lived, he was very forward in God's service, and calls upon him to repair the house of the Lord : but there was nothing more than good education all this while ; for, when his good tutor was taken out of the way, he appears to have been but a wolf chained up, and falls into idolatry.

6. In short, it consists not in illumination or conviction, in a superficial change or partial reformation. An apostate may be a man enlightened, and a Felix tremble under conviction, and a Herod amend many things. It is one thing to have sin alarmed only by convictions, and another to have it captivated and crucified by converting grace. Many, because they have been troubled in conscience for their sins, think well of their case, miserably mistaking " conviction for conversion." With these Cain might have

passed for a convert, who ran up and down the world like a man distracted, under the rage of a guilty conscience, till, with building and business, he had worn it away. Others think, that, because they have given over their riotous courses, and have broken off from evil company, or some particular vice, and reduced to sobriety and civility, they are now no other than real converts, forgetting that there is a vast difference between being sanctified and civilized ; and that many seek to enter into the kingdom of heaven, and " are not far from it," and arrive to the almost of Christianity, and yet fall short at last. While conscience alarms them, many will pray, hear, read, and forbear their delightful sin : but no sooner is the lion asleep, than they are at it again. Who were more religious than the Jews, when God's hand was upon them ? Yet no sooner was the affliction over, than they forgot God, and showed their religion to be a fit. Thou mayest have discarded a troublesome sin, that renders thee uneasy, and have escaped those gross pollutions of the world, and yet not have changed thy sinful nature all the while.

You may cast the lead out of the rude mass into the form and features of a man, yet all the while it is but lead still ; so a man may pass through divers transmutations, from ignorance to knowledge, from profaneness to civility, thence to a form of religion, and all this while he is but carnal and unregenerate, whilst his nature remains unchanged.

*Application.* Hear then, O sinners, hear as you would live, so come and hear. Why would you so wilfully deceive yourselves, or build your hopes upon the sand ? I know he shall find hard work of it that goes to pluck away your hopes. It cannot but be ungrateful to you, and truly it is not pleasing to me. I set about it as a surgeon, when to cut off a putrified member from his well-beloved friend, which of necessity he must do, though with an aching heart, a pitiful eye, and a trembling hand. But understand me,

brethren ; I am only taking down the ruinous house, which will otherwise speedily fall of Itself, and bury you in the rubbish, that I may build it fair, strong, and firm for ever. “ The hope of the wicked shall perish,” if God be true to his word. And hadst not thou better, O sinner, let the word convince thee now in time, and let go thy false and self-deluding hopes, than have death too late to open thine eyes, and find thyself in hell before thou art aware ? I should be a false and faithless shepherd if I should not tell you, that you, who have built your hopes upon no better grounds than these before-mentioned, are yet in your sins. Let your conscience speak : What is it that you have to plead for yourselves ? Is it that you wear Christ’s livery ? that you bear his name ? that you are of the visible church ? that you have knowledge in the points of religion, are civilized, perform religious duties, are just in your dealings, have been troubled in conscience for your sins ? I tell you, from the Lord, these pleas will never be accepted at God’s bar : all this, though good in itself, will not prove you converted, and so will not suffice to your salvation. O ! look about you, and bethink yourselves of turning speedily and soundly. Set to praying, and to reading, and to studying your own hearts ; rest not till God hath made thorough work with you ; for you must be other men, or else you are lost men.

But if these be short of conversion, what shall I say of the profane sinner ! It may be he will scarce cast his eyes or lend his ear to this discourse ; but, if there be any such reading it, he must know, from the Lord that made him, that he is far from the kingdom of God. May a man be civilized and not converted : where then shall the drunkard and glutton appear ? May a man keep company with the wise virgins, and yet be shut out ; shall not “ a companion of fools” much more be destroyed ? May a man be true and trusty in his dealings, and yet not be justified of God ; what then will become of thee, O wretched man, whose

conscience tells thee thou art false in thy trade, and false in thy word, and makest thy advantage by a lying tongue ? If men may be enlightened and brought to the performance of holy duties, and yet go down to perdition for resting in them, what will become of you, O miserable families, that live without God in the world ? and of you, O wretched sinners, with whom God is scarce in all your thoughts ; that are so ignorant that you cannot, or so careless that you will not pray ? O repent and be converted ; break off your sins by righteousness ; away to Christ for pardoning and renewing grace ; give up yourselves to him to walk with him in holiness, or else you shall never see God. O ! that you would take the warnings of God ! In his name I once more admonish you : “ Turn you at my reproof.” “ Forsake the foolish, and live.” “ Be sober, righteous, godly.” “ Wash your hands, you sinners ; purify your hearts, ye double-minded.” “ Cease to do evil, learn to do well.” But, if you will not, you must die.

## CHAPTER II.

*Showing positively what Conversion is.*

I MAY not leave you with your eyes half open, as he that saw “ men as trees walking.” The word is profitable for “ doctrine as well as reproof.” And therefore, having thus far conducted you by the shelves and rocks of so many dangerous mistakes, I will guide you at length into the harbour of truth.

Conversion then, in short, lies in the thorough change both of the heart and life. I shall briefly describe its nature and causes.

1. The author is the Spirit of God, and therefore it is called “ the sanctification of the Spirit,” and “ the renewing

of the Holy Ghost,” yet not excluding the other persons in the Trinity ; for the Apostle teacheth us to “ bless the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for that he hath begotten us again to a lively hope.” And Christ is said to “ give repentance unto Israel,” and is called the “ everlasting father,” and we his seed, and “ the children which God hath given him.” Yet this work is principally ascribed to the Holy Ghost, and so we are said to be “ born of the Spirit.”

So then, it is a work above man’s power : “ We are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” Never think thou canst convert thyself : if ever thou wouldst be savingly converted, thou must despair of doing it in thine own strength. It is a resurrection from the dead, “ You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins ;” a new creation ; a work of absolute omnipotence. Are these out of the reach of human power ? If thou hast no more than thou hadst by thy first birth, a good nature, a meek and chaste temper, &c., thou art a very stranger to true conversion : this is a supernatural work.

2. The moving cause is internal or external.

The internal mover is free grace alone. “ Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but of his own mercy he saved us, and by the renewing of the Holy Ghost.” “ Of his own will begat he us.” We are chosen and called unto sanctification, not for it.

God finds nothing in a man to turn his heart to him, but to turn it from him. Enough to provoke his loathing. Nothing to provoke his love. Look back upon thyself, O Christian ! look “ upon thyself in thy blood.” O ! reflect upon thy sinful nature ! Do not thine “ own clothes abhor thee ?” How then should holiness and pureness love thee ? “ Be astonished, O heavens,” at this ; be moved, O earth ! Who must but needs cry, “ grace ! grace !” Hear and blush, you children of the Most High ; O you unthankful generation ! that free grace is no more in your mouths, in

your thoughts, no more adored, admired, commended, by such as you ! One would think you should be doing nothing but praising and admiring God wherever you are. How can you ever forget such grace, or pass it over with a slight and seldom mention ? What but free grace should move God to love you, unless enmity could do it, or deformity could do it ? How affectionately doth Peter lift up his hands ! “ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, who of his abundant mercy hath begotten us again.” How feelingly doth Paul magnify the free mercy of God in it ! “ God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, hath quickened us together with Christ : By grace ye are saved.”

The external mover is the merit and intercession of the blessed Jesus. He hath “ obtained gifts for the rebellious,” and through him it is that God worketh in us what “ is well pleasing in his sight.” Through him are all spiritual blessings bestowed upon us in heavenly things. He interceded for the elect that believed not. Every convert is the fruit of his travail. He is made sanctified to us. He sanctified himself, that is, set apart himself as a sacrifice, that we may be sanctified. We are “ sanctified through the offering of his body,” once for all.

It is nothing then but the merit and intercession of Christ, that prevails with God to bestow on us converting grace. If thou art a new creature, thou knowest to whom thou owest it ; to Christ’s sufferings and prayers. Hence the natural affection of a believer to Christ. If any in the world have the same claim to thy heart that Christ can, let them show it. Doth Satan put in ? Doth the world court thee ? Doth sin sue for thy heart ? Why—were these crucified for thee ? O Christian, love and serve the Lord whilst thou hast a being. Do not even the publicans love those that love them, and show kindness to them that are kind to them ?

3. The instrument is either personal or real.

The personal is the ministry. “ I have begotten you in



Christ, through the gospel.” Christ’s minister’s are they that are sent “to open men’s eyes, and to turn them to God.”

O unthankful world, little do you know what you are doing while you are persecuting the messengers of the Lord ! These are they whose business it is (under Christ) to save you. Whom have you reproached and blasphemed ? Against whom have you exalted your voice, “and lifted your eyes on high.” “These are the servants of the most high God, that show unto you the way of salvation,” and “do you thus requite them ? O foolish and unwise !” These are the instruments that God useth to convert and save you : and do you insult your physicians, and throw your pilots overboard ? “Father, forgive them ; for they know not what they do.”

The instrument real is the word. We are begotten by the word of the truth : This is it, “that enlightens the eye ;” that “converteth the soul,” that “maketh wise to salvation.” This is the incorruptible seed, by which we are born again. If we are washed, it is “by the word.” If we are sanctified, it is “through the truth.” This generates faith, and regenerates us. “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth.”

O ye saints, how should ye love the word ! for by this you have been converted. O ye sinners, how should you ply the word ! for by this you must be converted. No other ordinary means but this. You that have felt its renewing power, make much of it while you live ; be ever thankful for it ; tie it about your necks ; write it upon your hand ; lay it in your bosoms. When you go, let it lead you ; when you sleep, let it keep you ; when you wake, let it talk with you : say with holy David, “I will never forget thy precepts, for by them thou hast quickened me.” You, that are unconverted, read the word with diligence ; flock to it where powerfully preached : fill the porches as “the multitude of the impotent, blind, halt, withered, waiting

for the moving of the water ;” pray for the coming of the Spirit in the word ; come off thy knees to the sermon, and go to thy knees from the sermon. The seed doth not prosper, because not watered by prayers and tears, nor covered by meditation.

4. The final cause is man’s salvation, and God’s glory. We are “chosen through sanctification to salvation,” called that we might be glorified, but especially “that God might be glorified,” that we should “show forth his praise,” and “be fruitful in good works.” O Christian ! do not forget the end of thy calling ; “let thy light shine,” let thy lamp burn ; let thy fruits be good and many, and in season ; let all thy designs fall in with God’s, that he may be “magnified in thee.” Why should God repent that he hath made thee a Christian, as in the time of the old world that he made them men ? Why shouldst thou be an eye-sore in his vineyard by thy unfruitfulness ? or “a son that causeth shame,” as it were “a grief to thy father, and a bitterness to her that bare thee ?” O let the “womb bless thee that bare thee !”

5. The subject is the elect sinner, and in that all his parts and powers, members and mind. Whom God predestinates, them only he calls. None are drawn to Christ by their calling, nor come to him by believing, but his sheep, those “whom the Father hath given him.” Effectual calling runs equal with eternal election.

Thou beginnest at the wrong end if thou disputest first about thine election. Prove thy conversion, and then never doubt of thy election : or, canst thou not yet prove it ? set upon a present and thorough turning. Whatever God’s purposes be, (which are secret), I am sure his precepts are plain. How desperately do rebels argue ! If I am elected, I shall be saved, do what I will ; if not, I shall be damned, do what I can. Perverse sinner ! wilt thou begin where thou shouldest end ? Is not the word before thee ? What saith it ? “Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted

out.” “If ye mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live.” Believe and be saved. What can be plainer? Do not stand still disputing about thine election, but set to repenting and believing; cry to God for converting grace. Revealed things belong to thee; in these busy thyself. Whatever God’s purposes be, I am sure his promises are true; whatever the decrees of heaven be, I am sure, that if I repent and believe, I shall be saved; and that, if I repent not, I shall be damned. Is not here plain ground for thee? and wilt thou yet run upon the rocks?

More particularly, this change of conversion passes throughout the whole subject. A carnal person may have some shreds of good morality; but he is never good throughout. Conversion is not the repairing of the old building; but it takes all down, and erects a new structure. The sincere Christian is quite a new fabric, from the foundation to the top-stone. He is a “new man,” a new creature. “All things are become new.” Conversion is a deep work, a heart-work. It makes a man to be in a new world. It goes throughout the man, throughout the mind, throughout the members, throughout the motion of the whole life.

1. Throughout the mind. It makes an universal change within.

First, it turns the balance of the judgment; so that God and his glory do weigh down all carnal and worldly interest. It opens the eye of the mind, and makes the scales of its native ignorance to fall off, and “turns men from darkness to light.” The man, that before saw no danger in his condition, now concludes himself lost and for ever undone, except renewed by the power of grace. He, that formerly thought there was little evil in sin, now comes to see it to be the chief of evils: he sees the unreasonableness, unrighteousness, the deformity, and vileness that are in sin; so that he is affrighted with it, loathes it, dreads it, flees it, and even abhors himself for it. He that could see little sin

in himself, and could find no matter for confession, (as it was said of that learned ignoramus Bellarmine, who, it seems, while he knew so much abroad, was such a miserable stranger to himself, that, when he was to be confessed by the priest, could not remember any things to confess, but was fain to go back to the sins of his youth)—I say, he that could not find matter for confession, unless it were some few gross and glaring evils, now sin reviveth with him, he sees the sinfulness of his heart, and desperate and deep pollution of his whole nature; he cries, “unclean, unclean.” Lord, purge me with hyssop, wash me thoroughly, “create in me a new heart.” He sees himself “altogether become filthy,” corrupt both root and tree, he writes unclean upon all his parts and powers, and performances. “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing.” He discovers the evils that he was never aware of, and sees the blasphemy, and theft, and murder, and adultery that are in his heart, of which before he was ignorant. Heretofore, he saw no form nor comeliness in Christ, nor beauty, that he should desire him; but now he finds the hidden treasure, and will sell all to buy this field. Christ is the pearl he seeks; sin the evil he loathes.

Now, according to this new light, the man is of another mind, another judgment, than before he was. Now God is all with him, he hath none in heaven, nor in earth, like him, he truly prefers him, before all the world; his favour is his life; the light of his countenance is more than corn, or wine and oil; the good that formerly he inquired after, and set his heart upon. Now, let all the world be set on one side, and God alone on the other; let the world present herself to the soul (as when Satan would have tempted our Saviour with her) in all the glory of her kingdoms, yet the soul will not fall down and worship her, but will prefer a naked, yea, a crucified, persecuted, Christ before her: he “counts all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus

Christ.” Not but a hypocrite may come to yield a generous assent to this, that God is the chief good ; yea, the wiser heathens (some few of them) have at last stumbled upon this ; but there is a difference between the absolute and comparative judgment of the understanding. No hypocrite comes so far as to look upon God as the most desirable and suitable good to him, and thereupon to acquiesce in him. This was the convert’s voice : “ The Lord is my portion saith my soul : whom have I in heaven but thee ? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.”

Secondly, It turns the bias of the will both as to means and end. 1. “ The intentions of the will are altered.” “ The desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee.” Now the man hath new ends and designs; now he intends God above all, and desires and designs nothing in all the world so much as “ that Christ may be magnified in him.” He counts himself more happy in this than in all that the earth could yield, that he may be serviceable to Christ, and bring him glory in his generation. This is the mark he aims at, that the name of Jesus may be great in the world, and that all the sheaves of his brethren may bow to his sheaf.

Reader, dost thou view this, and never ask thyself whether it be thus with thee ? Pause a while, and breathe on this great concern.

2. The election is also changed ; so that he chooseth another way. He pitcheth upon God as his blessedness, and upon Christ, as the principal, and holiness as the subordinate means to bring him to God. He chooseth Jesus for his Lord. He is not merely forced into Christ by the storm, nor doth he take Christ for bare necessity ; but he comes off freely in the choice. This match is not made in a fright, as with the terrified conscience, or dying sinner, that will seemingly do any thing for Christ, but doth only take Christ rather than hell ; but he deliberately resolves that Christ is his best choice, and would rather have him to

choose than all the good of this world, might he enjoy it while he would. Again, he takes holiness for his path ; he doth not of mere necessity submit to it ; but he likes and loves it : “ I have chosen the way of thy precepts.” He takes God’s testimonies, not as his bondage, “ but as his heritage ; yea, heritage for ever.” He counts them not his burden, but his bliss ; not his cords, but his cordials. “ For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments ; and his commandments are not grievous.” He doth not only bear, but takes up, Christ’s yoke. No time passeth so sweetly with him, when he is himself, as that he spends in the exercises of holiness : these are both his aliment and element, “ desire of his eyes,” and “ the joy of his heart.” Put it to thy conscience, as thou goest, whether thou art the man. O happy man, if this be thy case ! But see thou be thorough and impartial in the search.

Thirdly, It turns the bent of the affections. These run all in a new channel : the Jordan is now driven back, and the water runs upward, against its natural course.

Christ is his hope. This is his prize. Here his eye is ; here his heart is. He is contented to cast all overboard, (as the merchant in the storm ready to perish), so he may but keep this jewel.

The first of his desires is not after gold, but grace. He hungers after it, he seeks it as silver, he digs for it as for hid treasure : he had rather be gracious than be great ; he had rather be the holiest man on earth than the most learned, the most famous, most prosperous. While carnal, he said, O if I were but in great esteem, and rolled in wealth, and swimm’d in pleasure ! If my debts were paid, and I and mine provided for, then I were a happy man ! but now the tone is changed. O ! saith the convert, if I had but my corruptions subdued, if I had “ Such measures of grace, such fellowship with God, though I were poor and despised, I could not care ; I should account myself a blessed man.

Reader, is this the language of thy soul ?

His joys are changed. He rejoiceth “ in the ways of God’s testimonies, as much as in all riches.” He delights in the law of the Lord, wherein once he had little savour. He hath no such joy as in the thoughts of Christ, the fruition of his company, the prosperity of his people.

His cares are quite altered. He was once set upon the world ; and any scraps of by-time were enough for his soul : now, all the cry is, “ What shall I do to be saved ?” His great solicitude is now to secure his soul. O ! how would he bless you, if you could but put him out of doubt of this !

His fears are not so much of suffering, but of sinning. Once he was afraid of nothing so much as the loss of his estate or esteem, the pleasure of friends, the frowns of the great ; nothing sounded so terrible to him as pain, or poverty, or disgrace : now, these are little to him, in comparison of God’s dishonour or displeasure. How warily doth he walk, lest he should tread upon a snare ! He feareth alway ; he looks before and behind ; he hath his eye upon his heart, and is often watching lest he should be overtaken with sin. It kills his heart to think of losing God’s favour ; this he dreads as his only undoing. No thought in the world doth pain him so much as to think of parting with Christ.

His love runs a new course. My love was crucified, (saith Ignatius), that is, my Christ. “ This is my beloved,” saith the spouse. How doth Augustine often pour his love upon Christ ! “ O eternal blessedness !” &c.

He can find no words sweet enough, “ Let me see thee, O light of mine eyes : Come, O thou joy of my spirit. Let me behold thee, O life of my soul : O my God, my life, and the whole glory of my soul.”

His sorrows have now a new vent. The view of his sins, the sight of a Christ crucified, that would scarce stir him before, now how much do they affect his heart !

His hatred boils, his anger burns against sin. He hath no

patience with himself ; he calls himself fool and beast, and thinks any name too good for himself, when his indignation is stirred up against sin. “ So foolish was I, and ignorant ; I was as a beast before thee.”

Commune then with thine own heart, and attend the common and general current of thine affection, whether it be towards God in Christ above all other concerns. Indeed, sudden and strong commotions of the affections and sensitive parts are oft-times found in hypocrites ; especially where the natural inclination leads thereunto : and, contrariwise, the sanctified themselves are many times without sensible stirring of the affections, where the temper is more slow, dry, and dull. The great inquiry is, whether the judgment and will be unceasingly determined for God, above all other good, real or apparent ; and, if the affections do sincerely follow their choice and conduct, though it be not so strongly and sensibly as is to be desired, there is no doubt but the change is saving.

2. Throughout the members. Those that were before the instruments of sin, are now become the holy vessels of Christ’s living temple.

The eye that was once a wandering eye, a wanton eye, a haughty, a covetous eye, is now employed, (as Mary’s) in weeping over its sins, in beholding God in his works, in reading his words, in looking up and down for objects of mercy, and opportunities for his service.

The ear that was once open to Satan’s call, and did relish nothing so much as filthy, or at least foolish, talk and the fool’s laughter, is now open to his discipline. It saith, “ Speak, Lord, thy servant heareth.” It cries, with him, *Veniat Verbune Domini*, and waits for his words as the rain, and relisheth them more than the appointed food ; “ than the honey and the honey-comb.”

The head, that was filled with worldly designs, is now filled with other matters, and set on the study of God’s will ; and the man occupies his head, not so much about his

gain, as about his duty. The thoughts and cares that fill his head are principally how he may please God and avoid sin.

His heart that was filled with earthly affections, and carnal desires, is now become an altar of incense, where the fire of divine love is ever kept in, and whence the daily sacrifice of prayer and praise, and sweet incense of holy desires and ejaculations, are continually ascending.

The mouth is become a well of life, his tongue as choice silver, and his lips feed many—now the salt of grace has seasoned his speech, and eaten out the corruption, and cleansed the mouth from its evil communication, flattery, boasting, lying, swearing, backbiting, that once came like the flashes that proceeded from the hell that was in the heart. The throat, that was once “an open sepulchre,” now sends forth the sweet breath of prayer and holy discourse, and the man speaks in another tongue, in the language of Canaan, and is never so well as when talking of God and Christ, and the matters of another world. His mouth bringeth wisdom ; his tongue is become the silver trumpet of his Maker’s praise, his glory and the “best member that he hath.”

Now, here you shall have the hypocrite halting. He speaks, it may be, like an angel, but he hath a covetous eye, or the gain of unrighteousness in his hand ; or the hand is white, but his heart is full of rottenness, full of unmortified cares. It may be, with Nebuchadnezzar’s image, he hath a golden head, a great deal of knowledge ; but he hath feet of clay, his affections are worldly, he minds earthly things, and his way and walk are sensual and carnal ; you may trace him in his secret haunts, and his footsteps will be found in some by-paths of sin ; the work is not thorough with him.

3. Throughout the motions, or the life and practice, the new man takes a new course. His “conversation is in heaven.” No sooner doth Christ call by effectual grace, than he straightway becomes a “follower of him.” When God hath given the new heart, and written his law in his

mind, he forthwith “walks in his statutes, and keeps his judgments.”

Though sin may dwell (God knows, a wearisome and unwelcome guest) in him, yet he hath “no more dominion over him.” “He hath his fruit unto holiness.” And, though he makes many a blot, yet “the law of life,” and Jesus, is what he eyes as his copy, and he hath an unfeigned respect to all God’s commandments, making conscience even of little sins and little duties. His very infirmities, which he cannot help though he would, are his soul’s burden, and are like the dust in a man’s eye, which though but little, yet is not a little troublesome. (O man ! dost thou read this, and never turn in upon thy soul by self-examination ?) The sincere convert is not one man at church and another at home ; he is not a saint on his knees, and a cheat in his shop ; he will not tithe mint and cummin, and neglect mercy and judgment, and the weighty matters of the law ; he doth not pretend piety, and neglect morality, but he turneth from all his sins, and keeps all God’s statutes, though not perfectly (except in desire and endeavour), yet sincerely, not allowing himself in the breach of any. Now he delights in the word, and sets himself to prayer, and opens his hand, if able, and draws out his soul to the hungry. “He breaketh off his sins by righteousness, and his iniquities by showing mercy to the poor,” and hath “a good conscience, willing in all things to live honestly,” and to keep without offence toward God and man.

Here again you find the unsoundness of many professors, that take themselves for good Christians, they are partial in the law, and take up with the light and easy duties of religion, but go not through with the work. It may be you shall have them exact in their words, punctual in their dealings, but then they do not exercise themselves unto godliness ; and, for examining themselves and governing their hearts, to this they are strangers. You may have them duly at the church : but, follow them to their

families, and there you shall see little but the world minded ; or, if they attend to family duties, follow them to their closets, and there you shall find their souls are little looked after. It may be they seem otherwise religious, but bridle not their tongues, and so “ all their religion is in vain.” It may be they come up to closet and family prayer : but, follow them to their shops, and there you shall find them in a trade of lying, or some covert way of deceit. Thus the hypocrite goes throughout in the course of his obedience. And thus much for the subject of conversion.

6. The terms are either from which, or to which.

1. The terms from which we turn in this motion of conversion are, sin, Satan, the world, and our own righteousness.

First, Sin. When a man is converted, he is for ever out with sin ; yea, with all sin, but most of all with his own sins, and especially with his bosom sin. Sin is now the butt of his indignation. His sins excite his sorrows. It is sin that pierces him and wounds him ; he feels it like a thorn in his side : he groans and struggles under it, and not formally, but feelingly cries out, “ O wretched man !” He is not impatient of any burden so much as of his sin. If God should give him his choice, he would choose any affliction, so he might be rid of sin.

Before conversion, he had light thoughts of sin ; he cherished it in his bosom, as Uriah his lamb ; he nourished it up, and it grew up together with him ; it did eat, as it were, of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was to him as a daughter : but, when God opens his eyes by conversion, he throws it away with abhorrence. When a man is savingly changed, he is not only deeply convinced of the danger, but defilement of sin : and, O ! how earnest is he with God to be purified ! he loathes himself for his sins. He runs to Christ, and casts himself into “ the fountain for sin and for uncleanness.” If he fall, what a stir is there to get all clean again ! He flies to the

word, and washes, and labours to cleanse himself from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit : he abhors his once beloved sin.

The sound convert is heartily engaged against sin ; he struggles with it, he wars against it : he is too often foiled, but he will never yield the cause, nor lay down the weapons, while he has breath in his body ; he will never give quiet possession ; he will make no peace ; he will give no quarter ; befalls upon it, and is still disquieting it with continual alarms. He can forgive his other enemies ; he can pity them, and pray for them ; but here he is implacable, here he is set upon revenge : he hunteth as it were for the precious life ; his eyes shall not pity, his hand shall not spare, thought it be a right hand or a right eye. Be it a gainful sin, most delightful to his nature, or which gains him esteem with carnal friends, yet he will rather relinquish his gain, see his credit fall, or the flower of pleasure wither in his hand, than he will allow himself in any known way of sin. He will grant no indulgence ; he will give no toleration ; he hates sin wherever he meets it, and frowns upon it with this unwelcome salute, “ Have I found thee, O mine enemy !”

Reader, hath conscience been at work while thou hast been looking over these lines ? Hast thou pondered these things in thy heart ? Hast thou searched the book within, to see if these things be so ? If not, read it again, and make thy conscience speak whether or not it be thus with thee.

Hast thou crucified thy flesh with its affections and lusts ? and not only confessed, but forsaken, thy sins, all sin in thy fervent desires, and the ordinary practice of every deliberate and wilful sin in thy life ? If not, thou art yet unconverted. Doth not conscience fly in thy face as thou readest, and tell thee that thou livest in a way of lying for thy advantage, that thou usest deceit in thy calling, that there is some secret way of wantonness that thou livest in sin ? why then do not deceive thyself ; thou art in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity.

Doth not thy unbridled tongue, thy vile intemperance, thy wicked company, thy neglect of prayer, of reading and hearing the word, now witness against thee, and say, “ we are thy works, and we will follow thee ?” Or, if I have not hit thee right, doth not the monitor within tell thee, there is such or such a way as thou knowest to be evil, that yet for some carnal respect thou dost tolerate thyself in, and art willing to spare ? If this be thy case, thou art to this day unregenerate, and must be changed or condemned.

Secondly, Satan. Conversion binds the strong man, spoils his armour, casts out his goods, “ turns men from the power of Satan unto God.” Before, the devil could no sooner invite the sinner to his wicked company, sinful games and delights, but presently he followed, like an ox to the slaughter, and a fool to the correction of the stocks ; as the bird hasteth to the prey, and knoweth not that it is for his life. No sooner could Satan bid him lie, but presently he had it on his tongue. No sooner could Satan offer a wanton object, but he was stung with lust. The devil could do more with him than God could : if the devil says, “ away with these family-duties,” be sure they shall be rarely enough performed in his house : if the devil says, “ away with this strictness, this preciseness,” he will keep far enough from it : if he tell him, “ there is no need of these closet-duties,” he shall go from day to day, and scarce perform them. But, since he is converted, he serves another master, and takes quite another course, he goes and comes at Christ’s invitation. Satan may sometimes catch his foot in a trap, but he will no longer be a willing captive ; he watches against the snares of Satan, and studies to be acquainted with his devices ; he is very suspicious of his plots, and is very jealous in what comes athwart him, lest Satan should have some design upon him ; he “ wrestles against principalities and powers,” he entertains the messenger of Satan as men do the messenger of death ; he keeps his eye upon his enemy, and watches in his duties, lest Satan should get an

advantage.

Thirdly, The world. Before a sound faith, a man is overcome of the world : either he bows down to mammon, or idolizes his reputation, or is a “ lover of pleasure more than a lover of God.” Here is the root of man’s misery by the fall ; he is turned aside to the creature instead of God, and gives that esteem, confidence, and affection, to the creature, that is due to him alone.

O miserable man ! what a deformed monster hath sin made thee ! God made thee “ little lower than the angels ;” sin, little better than the devils. The world, that was formed to serve thee, is come to rule thee, and the deceitful harlot hath bewitched thee with her enchantments, and made thee bow down and serve her.

But converting grace sets all in order again, and puts God in the throne, and the world at his footstool. Christ in the heart, and the world under the feet. So Paul, “ I am crucified to the world and the world to me.” Before this change, all the cry was, “ who will show us any worldly good ?” but now his language is, “ Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me,” and take the corn and wine whoso will. Before, his heart’s delight and content were in the world ; then the song was, “ soul, take thy ease, eat, drink, and be merry ; thou hast much goods laid up for many years ;” But now all this is withered, and there is no comeliness, that we should desire it ; and he says with the sweet Psalmist of Israel : “ The Lord is the portion of my inheritance ; the lines are fallen to me in a fair place, and I have a goodly heritage.” He blesseth himself, and boasteth himself in God. Nothing else can give him content. He hath written “ vanity and vexation” upon all his worldly enjoyments, “ and loss and dung” upon all human excellencies. He hath “ life and immortality” now in his aim. He seeks for grace and glory, and hath a crown incorruptible in pursuit. His heart is set in him to seek the Lord. He first seeks “ the kingdom of heaven and the

righteousness thereof,” and religion is no longer a matter by-the-by with him, but the main of his care. Before, the world had the swaying interest with him ; he would do more for gain than godliness, more to please his friend, or his flesh, than to please the God that made him ; and God must stand by till the world was first served : But now all must stand by ; he hates father, and mother, and life, and all, in comparison of Christ. Well, then, pause a little, and look within : Doth not this nearly concern thee ? Thou pretendest for Christ, but doth not the world sway thee ? Dost thou not take more real delight and content in the world than in him ? Dost thou not find thyself better at ease when the world goes to thy mind, and thou art encompassed with carnal delight, than when retired to prayer and meditation in thy closet, or attending upon God’s word and worship ? No surer evidence of an unconverted state than to have the things of the world uppermost in our aim, love, and estimation.

With the sound convert, Christ has the supremacy. How dear is his name to him ! How precious is his favour ! The name of Jesus is engraven on his heart, and lies as a “ bundle of myrrh between his breasts.” Honour is but air, and laughter is but madness, and Mammon is fallen like Dagon before the ark, with hands and head broken off on the threshold, when once Christ is savingly revealed. Here is the pearl of great price to the true convert ; here is his treasure ; here is his hope. This is his glory, “ My beloved is mine, and I am his.” O ! it is sweeter to him to be able to say, Christ is mine, than if he could say, the kingdom is mine, the Indies are mine.

Fourthly, Your own righteousness. Before conversion, man seeks to cover himself with his own fig-leaves, and to make himself acceptable with his own duties. He is apt to trust in himself, and set up his own righteousness, and to reckon his counters for gold, and not “ submit to the righteousness of God.” But conversion changes his mind :

now he counts his own righteousness as filthy rags. Now he is brought to poverty of spirit, complains of and condemns himself, and all his inventory is “ poor, and miserable, and wretched, and blind, and naked.” He sees a world of iniquity in his holy things, and calls his once-idolized righteousness but dross ; and would not for a thousand worlds be found in himself. Now he begins to set a high price upon Christ’s righteousness ; he sees the need of Christ, in every duty, to justify his person, and justify his performances ; he cannot live without him ; he cannot pray without him ; Christ must go with him ; or else he cannot come into the presence of God ; he leans upon the hand of Christ, and so bows himself in the house of his God ; he sets himself down for a lost undone man without him ; his life is hid in Christ, as the root of a tree spreads in the earth, for stability and nutriment. Before, the news of Christ was a stale and vapid thing ; but now how sweet is Christ ! Augustine could not relish his before so much-admired Cicero, because he could not find the name of Christ : how pathetically cries he, “ O most sweet, most loving, most kind, most dear, most precious, most desired, most lovely, most fair, &c.” all in a breath, when he speaks of and to Christ. In a word, the voice of the convert is with the martyr, “ none but Christ.”

The terms, which are either ultimate, or subordinate, or mediate.

The ultimate is, God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, whom the true convert takes as his all-sufficient and eternal blessedness. A man is never truly sanctified till his very heart be in truth set upon God above all things, as his portion and chief good. These are the natural breathings of a believer’s heart : “ Thou art my portion. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord. My expectation is from him ; he only is my rock and my salvation ; he is my defence ; in God is my salvation and glory ; the rock of my strength, and my refuge is in God.”



Would you put it to an issue, whether you be converted or not ? Now let thy soul and all that is within thee attend.

Hast thou taken God for thy happiness ? Where doth the content of thy heart lie ? Whence doth thy choicest comfort come in ? Come then, and, with Abraham, lift up thine eyes eastward, and westward, and northward, and southward, and look about thee, what is it that thou wouldst have in heaven, or on earth, to make thee happy ? If God should give thee thy choice, as he did to Solomon, or should say to thee, as Ahasuerus to Esther, “ What is thy petition, and what is thy request, and it shall be granted thee ? ” What wouldst thou ask ? Go

into the gardens of pleasure, and gather all the fragrant flowers thence : Would these content thee ? Go to the treasures of Mammon ; suppose thou mightest lade thyself as thou wouldst from hence. Go to the towers, to the trophies of honour : what thinkest thou of being a man of renown, and having a name like the name of the great men of the earth ? Would any of these, all these suffice thee, and make thee count thyself a happy man ? If so, then certainly thou art carnal and unconverted. If not, go farther ; go into the divine excellencies, the store of his mercies, the hiding of his power, the depths unfathomable of his all-sufficiency : Doth this suit thee best and please thee most ? Dost thou say, “ It is good to be here ? ” “ Here will I pitch ; here will I live, and die ? ” Wilt thou let all the world go rather than this ? Then it is well between God and thee ? happy art thou, O man ; happy art thou that ever thou wast born : if a God can make thee happy, thou must needs be happy ; for thou hast vouched the Lord to be thy God. Dost thou say to Christ as he to us, “ Thy Father shall be my Father, and thy God be my God. ” Here is the turning point : an unsound professor never takes up his rest in God, but converting grace does the work, and so cures the fatal misery of the fall, by turning the heart from its idol to the living God. Now, says the soul, “ Lord, whither shall

I go ? Thou hast the words of eternal life. ” Here he centers, here he settles. O ! it is the entrance of heaven to him, to see his interest in God. When he discovers this, he saith, “ return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. ” And it is even ready to breathe out Simeon’s song, “ Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, ” and saith, with Jacob, when his old heart revived at the welcome tidings, “ it is enough. ” When he sees he hath a God in covenant to go to, “ this is all his salvation, and all his desire. ”

Man, is this thy case ? hast thou experienced this ? why then “ blessed art thou of the Lord ; ” God hath been at work with thee ; he hath laid hold on thy heart by the power of converting grace, or else thou couldst never have done this.

The mediate term of conversion is either principal or less principal.

The principal is Christ, the only “ mediator between God and man. ” His work is to bring us to God. He is “ the way to the Father, ” the only plank on which we may escape, the only “ door by which we may enter. ” Conversion brings over the soul to Christ to accept him, as the only means of life, as the only way, “ the only name given under heaven. ” He looks not for salvation in any other but him ; nor in any other with him : but throws himself on Christ alone.

Here, saith the convinced sinner, “ I will venture : and, if I perish, I perish : If I die, I will die here. But, Lord, suffer me not to perish under the pitiful eye of thy mercy. Entreat me not to leave thee, or to turn away from following after thee. Here I will throw myself ; if thou slay me, I will not go from thy door. ”

Thus the poor soul doth venture on Christ, and resolvedly adheres to him. Before conversion, the man made light of Christ, minded his farm, friends, merchandise, more than Christ, now Christ is to him, as his necessary food, his daily bread, the life of his heart, the staff

of his life. His great design is, “ that Christ may be magnified in him.” His heart once said, as then to the spouse, “what is thy beloved more than another ?” He found more sweetness in his merry company, wicked games, earthly delights, than in Christ. He took religion for a fancy, and the talk of great enjoyments for an idle dream : but now to him to live is Christ. He sets light by all that he accounted precious, “ for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ.”

All of Christ is accepted by the sincere convert : He loves not only the wages, but the work of Christ, not only the benefits, but the burden, of Christ ; he takes up the commands of Christ ; yea, and cross of Christ.

The unsound closeth by halves with Christ—he is all for the salvation of Christ, but he is not for sanctification—he is for the privileges, but appropriates not the person, of Christ—he divides the offices and benefits of Christ. This is an error in the foundation. Whoso loveth life, let him beware here ; it is an undoing mistake of which you have been often warned, and yet none more common. Jesus is a sweet name : but men “ love not the Lord Jesus in sincerity.” They will not have him as God offers, “ to be a Prince and a Saviour.” They divide what God hath joined, the King and the Priest. Yea, they will not accept the salvation of Christ as he intends it ; they divide it here. Every man is for salvation from suffering ; but they desire not to be saved from sinning ; they would have their lives saved, but withal would save their sins. Yea, many divide here again ; they would be content to have some of their sins destroyed, but they cannot leave the lap of Delilah, or divorce the beloved Herodias : they cannot be cruel to the right eye, or without exceptions, without limitations, the right hand. The Lord must pardon them in this thing. O ! be carefully tender here : your souls be upon it. The sound convert takes Christ wholly, and takes him for all intents and purposes. He is willing to have Christ upon any

terms ; he is willing to have the dominion of Christ, as well as deliverance by Christ ; he saith, with Paul, “ Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ?” Any thing, Lord : he sends the blank to Christ, to set down his own conditions.

The less principal is the laws, ordinances, and ways of Christ. The heart that was once set against these, and could not endure the strictness of these bonds, the severity of these ways, now falls in love with them, and chooses them as its rule and guide for ever.

Four things, I observe, God doth work in every sound convert, with reference to the laws and ways of Christ, by which you may come to know your state, if you will be faithful to your own souls, and therefore keep your eyes upon your hearts as you go along.

I. The judgment is brought to approve of them, and subscribe to them as most righteous, and most reasonable. The mind is brought to like the ways of God ; and the corrupt prejudices that were once against them, as unreasonable and intolerable, are now removed. The understanding assents to them all, as “ holy, just, and good.” How is David taken up with the excellencies of God’s laws ! How doth he expatiate on their praises, both from their inherent qualities and admirable effects.

There is a twofold judgment of the understanding. The absolute judgment is, when a man thinks such a course best in the general, but not for him, or not under the present circumstances. Now, a godly man’s judgment is for the ways of God, and that not only the absolute, but comparative, judgment ; he thinks them not only the best in general, but best for him ; he looks upon the rules of religion not only as tolerable, but desirable ; yea, more desirable than gold, fine gold ; “ yea, much fine gold.”

His judgments are settledly determined, that it is best to be holy, that it is best to be strict, that it is in itself the most eligible course, and that it is for him the wisest and most rational and desirable choice. Hear the godly man’s

judgment : “ I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right ; I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold ; I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right ; and I hate every false way.” Mark, he did approve of all that God required, and disallowed of all that he forbade : “ Righteous, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments. Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded are righteous and very faithful. Thy word is true from the beginning, and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.” See how readily and fully he subscribes ; he declares his assent and consent to it, and all and every thing therein contained.

2. The desire of the heart is to know the whole mind of Christ. He would not have one sin undiscovered, nor be ignorant of one duty required. It is the natural and earnest breathing of a sanctified heart : “ Lord, if there be any way of wickedness in me, do thou discover it. What I know not, teach thou me ; and if I have done iniquity, I will do it no more.” The unsound is willingly ignorant, loves not to come to the light. He is willing to keep such or such a sin, and therefore is loath to know it to be a sin, and will not let in the light at that window. Now the gracious heart is willing to know the whole latitude and compass of his Maker’s law : “ Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes ; and I shall keep it unto the end.” He receives with all acceptation, the word, that convinceth him of any duty that he knew not, or minded not before, or discovereth any sin that lay hid before.

3. The free and resolved choice of the will is determined for the ways of Christ, before all the pleasures of sin and prosperities of the world. His consent is not extorted by some extremity of anguish, nor is it only a sudden and hasty resolve, but he is deliberate in his purpose, and comes freely to the choice. True, the flesh will rebel, yet the prevailing part of his will is for Christ’s laws and government ; so that he takes them not up as his toil or burden, but his bliss.

While the unsanctified goes in Christ’s ways as in chains and fetters, he doth it naturally, and counts Christ’s laws his liberty. He willingly loves the beauties of holiness, and hath this inseparable mark, “ That he had rather, if he might have his choice, live a strict and holy life, than the most prosperous and flourishing life in the world.” “ There went with Saul a band of men, whose hearts God had touched.” When God toucheth the hearts of his chosen, they presently follow Christ and, though drawn, do freely run after him, and willingly offer themselves to the service of the Lord, seeking him with their whole desire. Fear hath its use ; but this is not the main spring of motion with a sanctified heart. Christ keeps not his subjects in by force, but is king of a willing people. They are, through his grace, freely resolved for his service, and do it out of choice, not as slaves, but as the son or spouse, from a spring of love, and a loyal mind. In a word, the laws of Christ are the convert’s love, desire, delight, and continual study.

4. The bent of his course is directed to keep God’s statutes. It is the daily care of his life to walk with God. He seeks great things, he hath noble designs, though he fall too short. He aims at nothing less than perfection ; he desires it, he reaches after it ; he would not rest in any pitch of grace, till he were quite rid of sin, and had perfect holiness.

Here the hypocrite’s rottenness may be discovered. He desires holiness, as one well said, only as a bridge to heaven, and inquires earnestly what is the least that will serve his turn, and if he can get but so much as may bring him to heaven, this is all he cares for. But the sound convert desires holiness for holiness’ sake, and not only for heaven’s sake. He would not be satisfied with so much as might save him from hell, but desires the highest pitch ; yet desires are not enough. What is thy way and thy course ? Are the drift and scope of thy life altered ? Is holiness thy desire, and religion thy business ? If not, thou art short of sound conversion.

*Application.* And is this, that we have described, the conversion that is of absolute necessity to salvation ? Then be informed, 1. That strait is the gate, and narrow the way, that leadeth unto life. 2. That there are but few that find it. 3. That there is need of a divine power savingly to convert a sinner to Jesus Christ.

Again, then be exhorted, O man that readest, to turn in upon thine own self. What saith conscience ? Doth it not begin to accuse ? Doth it not pain thee as thou goest ? Is this thy judgment, and this thy choice, and this thy way, that we have described ? If so, then it is well. But doth not thy heart condemn thee, and tell thee there is such a sin thou livest in against thy conscience ? Doth it not tell thee there is such and such a secret way of wickedness that thou wishest to retain ? Such or such a duty that thou makest no conscience of ?

Doth not conscience carry thee to thy closet, and tell thee how seldom prayer and reading are performed there ? Doth it not carry thee to thy family, and show thee the charge of God, and the souls of thy children and servants, that are neglected there ? Doth not conscience lead thee to thy shop, thy trade, and tell thee of some mystery of iniquity there ? Doth it not carry thee to the ale-house, and condemn thee for the loose company thou keepest there, the precious time thou misspendest there, for the talents of God which thou throwest away, for thy gaming, and thy drinking &c. ? Doth it not carry thee into thy secret chamber, and severely accuse thee ?

O conscience ! do thy duty : in the name of the living God, I command thee, discharge thine office ; lay hold upon this sinner, fall upon him, arrest him, apprehend him, undeceive him. What ! wilt thou flatter and smooth him while he lives in his sins ? Awake, O conscience ! what meanest thou, O sleeper ? What ! hast thou never a reproof in thy mouth ? What ! shall this soul die in his careless neglect of God and eternity, and thou altogether hold thy

peace ? What ! shall he go on still in his trespasses, and yet have peace ? O ! rouse up thyself, and do thy work. Now let the preacher in thy bosom speak, cry aloud, and spare not ; lift up thy voice like a trumpet ; let not the “ blood of his soul ” be required at thy hands.

## CHAPTER III.

### *Of the Necessity of Conversion.*

IT may be you are ready to say, what meaneth this stir ? and are apt to wonder why I follow you with such earnestness, still ringing the same lesson in your ears, “ that you should repent, and be converted.” But I must say unto you, as Ruth to Naomi, “ entreat me not to leave you, nor to turn from following after you.” Were it a matter of indifference, I would never make so much ado : might you be saved as you are, I would gladly let you alone. But would you not have me solicitous for you, when I see you ready to perish ? As the Lord liveth, before whom I am, I have not the least hopes to see one of your faces in heaven, except you be converted : I utterly despair of your salvation, except you will be prevailed with to turn thoroughly, and give up yourself to God in holiness and newness of life. Hath God said, “ except you be born again, you cannot see the kingdom of God,” and yet do you wonder why your ministers do so plainly travail in birth with you ? Think it not strange that I am earnest with you to follow after holiness, and long to see the image of God upon you. Never did any, nor shall any, enter into heaven by any other way but this. The conversion described is not the high attainment of some advanced Christians, but every soul that is saved undergoeth this universal change.

It was a passage of the noble Roman, when he was

hasting with corn to the city in the famine, and the mariners were loath to set sail in foul weather, “ Our voyage is more necessary than our lives.” What is it that thou dost count necessary ? Is thy bread necessary ? Is thy breath necessary ? Then thy conversion is much more necessary. Indeed, this is the one thing necessary. Thine estate is not necessary ; thou mayest sell all for “ the pearl of great price,” and yet be a gainer by the purchase. Thy life is not necessary ; thou mayest part with it for Christ to infinite advantage. Thine esteem is not necessary ; thou mayest be reproached for the name of Christ, and yet be happy ; yea, much more happy in reproach than in repute. But thy conversion is necessary ; thy damnation depends upon it : and is it not needful, in so important a case, to look about thee ? On this one point depends thy making or marring to all eternity.

But I shall more particularly show the necessity of conversion in five things ; for without this,

I. Thy being is in vain. Is it not a pity thou shouldst be good for nothing, an unprofitable burden on the earth, a wart or wen in the body of the universe ? Thus thou art, whilst unconverted : for thou canst not answer the end of thy being. Is it not for the divine “ pleasure that thou art and wast created ?” Did he not make thee for himself ? Art thou a man, and hast thou reason ? Why, then, bethink thyself why and whence thy being is. Behold God’s workmanship in thy body, and ask thyself, to what end did God rear this fabric ? Consider the noble faculties of thy heaven-born soul. To what end did God bestow these excellencies ? Was it to no other than that thou shouldst please thyself and gratify thy senses ? Did God send men into the world, for no higher purpose, than like swallows, only to gather a few sticks and mud, and build their nests, and rear up their young, and then away ? The very heathens could see farther than this. Art thou so “ fearfully and wonderfully made,” and dost thou not yet think with

thyself, surely it was for some noble and glorious end ?

O man ! set thy reason a little in its seat. Is it not a pity such a goodly fabric should be raised in vain ? Verily thou art in vain, except thou art for God. Better thou hadst no being than not be for him. Wouldst thou serve thy end ? thou must repent and be converted : without this, thou art to no purpose ; yea, to bad purpose.

First, To no purpose. Man, unconverted, is like a choice instrument that hath every string broken or out of tune. The Spirit of the living God must repair and tune it by the grace of regeneration, and sweetly move it by the power of actuating grace, or else thy prayers will be only discordant tones, and thy services will make no music in the ears of the most Holy. All thy powers and faculties are so corrupt in thy natural state, that, except thou “ be purged from dead works,” thou canst not “ serve the living God.”

An unsanctified man cannot work the work of God. 1. He hath no skill in it ; he is altogether as unskilful in the work as in the word of righteousness. There are great mysteries, as well in the practices as principles of godliness. Now the unregenerate know not the “ mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.” You may as well expect him that never learned the alphabet, to read, or one that never set his hand to an instrument, to perform with skill and beauty, as that a natural man should do the Lord any pleasing service. He must first be taught of God, taught to pray, taught to profit, taught to go, or else he will be utterly at a loss. 2. He hath no strength for it. How weak is his heart ! he is presently tired. The Sabbath, “ what a weariness is it !” He is “ without strength,” yea, stark “ dead in sin.” 3. He hath no mind to it ; he desires not the knowledge of God’s ways, he doth not know them, and he doth not care to know them, he knows not, neither will he understand. 4. He hath neither due instruments nor materials for it. A man may as well hew the marble without tools, or build without materials, as perform any acceptable services

without the graces of the Spirit, which are both the materials and instruments in the work. Alms-giving is not a service of God, but of vain-glory, if not held forth by the hand of divine love. What is the prayer of the lips without grace in the heart, but the carcass without the life ? What are all our confessions, unless they be exercises of godly sorrow and unfeigned repentance ? What our petitions, unless animated all along with holy desires and faith in the divine attributes and promises ? What our praises and thanksgivings, unless from the love of God, and a holy gratitude and sense of God's mercies in the heart ? So that a man may as well expect the trees should speak, or motion from the dead, as for any service holy and acceptable to God from the unconverted. When the tree is evil, how can the fruit be good ?

Secondly, To bad purpose. The unconverted soul is a very "cage of unclean birds," a sepulchre full of "corruption and rottenness." O dreadful case ! Dost thou not yet see a change to be needful ? Would it not have grieved one to have seen the golden consecrated vessels of God's temple turned into quaffing bowls of drunkenness, and polluted with the idol's service ? Was it such an abomination to the Jews, when Antiochus set up the picture of a swine at the entrance of the temple ? How much more abominable then would it have been to have had the very temple itself turned into a stable or a sty, and to have had the "holy of holies" served like the house of Baal. This is the very case of the unregenerate : all thy members are turned into "instruments of unrighteousness," servants of Satan ; and thy inmost heart into a receptacle of uncleanness. You may see what kind of guests are within, by what comes out ; for "out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies," &c. This discovers what wickedness there is within.

O abuse insufferable ! to see a heaven-born soul abased

to such vileness ! to see the glory of God's creation, the chief of the works of God, the Lord of this lower world, eating husks with the prodigal. Was it such a lamentation to see those that did feed delicately sit desolate in the streets ; and the precious sons of Sion, comparable to fine gold, esteemed as earthen pitchers ? and is it not much more fearful to see the only being that hath immortality in this lower world, and carries the stamp of God, "become as a vessel wherein there is no pleasure ?" O indignity intolerable ! Better thou wert dashed in a thousand pieces, than continue to be abased to so vile a service.

II. Not only man, but the whole visible creation, "is in vain without this." Beloved, God hath made all the visible creatures in heaven and earth for the service of man, and man only is the spokesman for all the rest. Man is, in the world, like the tongue to the body, which speaks for all the members. The other creatures cannot praise their Maker, but by dumb signs and hints to man, that he should speak for them. Man is, as it were, the high priest of God's creation, to "offer the sacrifice of praise" for all his fellow-creatures. The Lord God expecteth a tribute of praise from all his works. Now, all the rest do bring in their tribute to man, and pay it by his hand : so then, if a man be false, and faithless, and selfish, God is wronged of all, and shall have no active glory from his works.

O dreadful thought to think of ! that God should create such a world as this is, and lay out such infinite power, and wisdom, and goodness, thereupon, and all in vain ; and man should be guilty, at last, of robbing and spoiling him of the glory of all ! O, think of this ! While thou art unconverted, all the offices of the creatures to thee are in vain ; thy meat nourishes thee in vain ; the sun holds forth his light to thee in vain ; the stars, that serve thee in their courses by their powerful, though hidden, influence, do it in vain ; thy clothes warm thee in vain ; in a word, the unwearied labour and continual travail of the whole creation, (as to thee), are

in vain. The service of all the creatures that drudge for thee, and yield forth their strength unto thee, (that therewith thou shouldst serve their Maker), is all but lost labour. Hence “the whole creation groaneth” under the abuse of this unsanctified world, that pervert them to the service of their lusts, quite contrary to the very end of their being.

III. Without this, thy religion is vain. All thy religious performances will be but lost ; for they cannot please God, which are the very ends of religion. Be thy services ever so specious, yet God “hath no pleasure in them.” Is not that man’s case dreadful, whose sacrifices are polluted, and whose prayers are a breath of abomination ? Many, under convictions, think they will set upon mending, and that a few prayers and alms will salve all again ; but, alas, sirs ! while your hearts remain unsanctified, your desires will not pass. How punctual was Jehu ! and yet all was rejected, because his heart was not upright. How blameless was Paul ! and yet being unconverted, all was but loss. Men think they do much in attending God’s service, and are ready to set him down so much their debtor, whereas, their persons being unsanctified, their duties cannot be accepted.

O soul ! do not think, when thy sins pursue thee, a little praying and reforming thy course will pacify God. Thou must begin with thine heart : if that be not renewed, thou canst no more please God than one that, having unspeakably offended thee, should insult thee in order to pacify thee.

It is a great misery to labour in the fire. The poets could not invent a worse hell for Sisyphus than to be getting the stone still up the hill, and then that it should presently fall down again and renew his labour. God threatens it as the greatest of temporal judgments, that they should build and not inhabit, plant and not gather, and their labours should be eaten up by strangers. Is it so great a misery to lose our common labours, to sow in vain, and build in vain ? how

much more to lose our pains in religion ; to pray, and hear, and fast in vain ! This is an undoing and eternal loss ! Be not deceived ; if thou goest on in thy sinful state, though thou shouldst spread forth thy hands, God will hide his eyes ; “though thou make many prayers, he will not hear.” God will be worshipped after the due order. If a servant do our work, but quite contrary to our order, he shall have rather stripes than praise. God’s work must be done according to God’s mind, or he will not be pleased ; and this cannot be, except it be done with a holy heart.

IV. Without this, thy hopes are in vain. “The hypocrite’s hope shall perish.” “The Lord hath rejected thy confidence.”

First, The hope of comforts here is in vain. It is not only necessary to the safety, but comfort, of your condition, that you be converted. Without this, “you shall not know peace.” Without the “fear of God” you cannot have the “comfort of the Holy Ghost.” God speaks peace only “to his people and to his saints.” If you have a false peace, continuing in your sins, it is not of God’s speaking, and then you may guess the author. Sin is a real sickness, yea, the worst of sickness : it is a leprosy in the head, the plague of the heart ; it is brokenness in the bones, it pierceth, it woundeth, it racketh, it tormenteth. A man may as well expect ease when his distempers are in the full strength, or his bones out of joint, as true comfort while in his sins.

O wretched man, that canst have no ease in this case, but what comes from the deadliness of the disease ! You shall have the poor sick man saying, in his lightness, “he is well,” when you see death in his face ; he would needs be up, and about his business, when the very next step is like to be in his grave. The unsanctified often see nothing amiss ; they think themselves whole, and cry not out for the physician ; but this shows the danger of their case.

Sin doth naturally create distempers and disturbances in

the soul. What a continual tempest and commotion is there in a discontented mind ? what an eating evil is inordinate care ? what is passion but a very fever in the mind ? what is lust but a fire in the heart ? what is covetousness, but an insatiable and insufferable thirst ? or malice and envy, but venom in the very heart ? Spiritual sloth, is but a scurvy in the mind, and carnal security a mortal lethargy ; and how can that soul have true comfort that is under so many diseases ? But converting grace cures, and so eases the mind ; prepares the soul for a settled, standing, immortal peace : “ Great peace have they that love thy commandments, and nothing shall offend them.” They are the ways of wisdom, that afford pleasure and peace. David had infinitely more pleasure in the word than in all the delights of his court. The conscience cannot be truly pacified till soundly purified. Cursed is that peace that is maintained in a way of sin. Two sorts of peace are more to be dreaded than all the troubles in the world : peace with sin, and peace in sin.

Secondly, Thy hopes of salvation hereafter are in vain ; yea, worse than in vain ; they are most injurious to God, most pernicious to thyself. There is death, desperation, blasphemy, in the bowels of this hope. 1. There is death in it : thy confidence shall be rooted out of thy tabernacles, (God will up with it root and branch) ; “ it shall bring them to the king of terrors.” Though thou mayest “ lean upon this house, it will not stand,” but will prove like a ruinous building, which, when a man trusts to, it falls upon his head. 2. There is desperation in it : where is the hope of the hypocrite when God takes away his soul ? Then there is an end for ever of his hope. Indeed, the hope of the righteous hath an end ; but then it is not a destructive, but a perfective end ; his hope ends in fruition, others in frustration. The godly must say at death, “ It is finished :” but the wicked, “ It is perished,” and in too sad earnest bemoan himself, as Job in a mistake, “ Where is now my hope ? He hath destroyed me ; I am gone, and my hope is

removed like a tree.” “ The righteous hath hope in his death.” When nature is dying, his hopes are living ; when his body is languishing, his hopes are flourishing : his hope is a living hope, but others a dying, a damning, soul-undoing hope. “ When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish ; and the hope of the unjust men perisheth.” It shall be cut off, and prove like a spider’s web, which he spins out of his own bowels ; but then comes death, with the broom, and takes down all, and so there is an eternal end of his confidence wherein he trusted ; “ for the eyes of the wicked shall fail, and their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost.” Wicked men are fixed in the carnal hope, and will not be beaten out of it ; they hold it fast ; they will not let it go : yea, but death will knock off their fingers. Though we cannot undeceive them, death and judgment will : when death strikes his dart through thy liver, it will out with thy soul and thy hopes together. The unsanctified have hope only in this life, and therefore are “ of all men most miserable.” When death comes, it lets them out into the amazing gulph of endless desperation. 3. There is blasphemy in it. To hope we shall be saved, though continuing unconverted, is to hope we shall prove God a liar. He hath told you, that so merciful and pitiful as he is, he will never save you notwithstanding, if you go on in ignorance, or a course of unrighteousness. In a word, he hath told you, that, whatever you be or do, nothing shall avail you to salvation, without you become new creatures. Now, to say God is merciful, and we hope will save us nevertheless, is in effect to say, “ We hope God will not do as he says.” We must not set God’s attributes at variance ; God has resolved to glorify his mercy, but not to the prejudice of truth, as the presumptuous sinner will find to his everlasting sorrow.

*Object.* Why, but we hope in Jesus Christ ; we put our whole trust in God ; and therefore doubt not but we shall be saved.



*Answ.* 1. This is not hope in Christ, but against Christ. To hope to see the kingdom of God without being born again, to hope to find eternal life in the broad way, is to hope Christ will prove a false prophet. It is David's plea, "I hope in thy word." But this hope is against the word. Show me a word of Christ for thy hope, that he will save thee in thine ignorance or profane neglect of his service, and I will never go to shake thy confidence.

2. God doth with abhorrence reject this hope. Those condemned in the prophet went on in their sins, yet, (saith the text), they will lean upon the Lord, Mic. iii. 11. God will not endure to be made a prop to men in their sins ; the Lord rejected those presumptuous sinners that went on still in their trespasses, and yet " would stay themselves upon Israel's God."

3. If thy hope be any thing worth, it will purify thee from thy sins. " Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." But cursed is that hope which doth cherish men in their sins.

*Object.* Would you have us to despair ?

*Answ.* You must despair of ever coming to heaven as you are, that is, while you remain unconverted. You must despair of ever seeing the face of God without holiness ; but you must by no means despair of finding mercy, upon your thorough repentance and conversion ; neither may you despair of attaining to repentance and conversion in the use of God's means.

V. Without this, all that God hath done and suffered will be as to you in vain, that is, it will no way avail you to salvation. Many urge this as a sufficient ground for their hopes, that Christ died for sinners. But I must tell you, Christ never died to save impenitent and unconverted sinners continuing so. A great divine was wont, in his private dealings with souls, to ask two questions : 1. What hath Christ done for you ? 2. What hath Christ wrought in you ? Without the application of the Spirit in regeneration,

we can have no saving interest in the benefits of redemption. I tell you from the Lord, Christ himself cannot save you, if you go on in this state.

I. It were against his trust. The Mediator is the " servant of the Father," shows his commission from him, and acts in his name, and pleads his command for his justification ; and God has committed all things to him, intrusted his own glory and the salvation of the elect with him. Accordingly, Christ gives his Father an account of both parts of his trust before he leaves the world. Now Christ would quite tarnish his Father's glory, his greatest trust, if he should save men in their sins, for this were to overturn all his counsels, and to offer violence to all his attributes.

First, To overturn all his counsels ; of which this is the order, that men should be brought " through sanctification to salvation." He hath " chosen them, that they should be holy." They are elected to pardon and life through sanctification. If thou canst repeal the law of God's immutable counsel, or corrupt him whom the Father hath sealed, to go directly against his commission, then, and not otherwise, mayest thou get to heaven in this condition. To hope that Christ will save thee, while unconverted, is to hope that Christ will falsify his trust. He never did nor will save one soul, but whom the Father hath given him in election, and drawn to him in effectual calling. Be assured that Christ will save none in a way contrary to his Father's will.

Secondly, To offer violence to all his attributes.

1. To his justice : for the righteousness of God's judgment lies in rendering to all " according to their works." Now, should men sow to the flesh, and yet " of the Spirit reap everlasting life," where were the glory of divine justice, since it should be given to the wicked according to the work of the righteous ?

2. To his holiness. If God should not only save sinners,

but save them in their sins, his most pure and strict holiness would be exceedingly defaced. It would be offering the extremest violence to the infinite purity of the divine nature to have sinners to dwell with him : “ They cannot stand his judgments ; they cannot abide his presence.” If holy David would not endure such in his house, no, nor in his sight, can we think God will ? Should he take men as they are to the glory of heaven, the world would think God were at no such distance from sin, nor had such dislike to it, as we are told he hath ; they would conclude God were altogether such a one as themselves (as they wickedly did, from the very forbearance of God, Psalm l. 21.)

3. To his veracity : for God hath declared from heaven, that, “ if any shall say he shall have peace, though he shall go on in the imagination of his heart, his wrath shall smoke against that man.” That “ they, (only), that confess and forsake their sins shall find mercy.” That “ they that shall enter into his hill must be of clean hands and pure heart.” Where were God’s truth, if, notwithstanding all this, he should bring men to salvation without conversion ? O desperate sinner, that darest to hope that Christ will make his Father a liar, and nullify his word, to save thee !

4. To his wisdom : for this were to throw away the choicest of mercies on them that would not value them, nor were any way suited to them.

First, They would not value them ; the unsanctified sinner puts but little price upon God’s great salvation. He sets no more by Christ than the whole by the physician. He prizes not his balm, values not his cure, tramples upon his blood. Now, would it stand with wisdom to force pardon and life upon those that would give him no thanks for them ? Will the all-wise God, when he hath forbidden us to do it, throw his holy things to dogs, and his pearls to swine, that would, as it were, but “ turn again and rend him ?” This would make mercy to be despised indeed. Wisdom requires that life be given in a way suitable to God’s honour, and

that God provide for the securing of his own glory as well as man’s felicity. It would be dishonourable to God to bestow his choicest riches on them that have more pleasure in their sins, than in the heavenly delights that he doth offer. God would lose the praise and glory of his grace, if he should cast it away upon them that were not only unworthy, but unwilling.

Secondly, They are no way suited to them. The divine wisdom is seen in suiting things to each other, the means to the end, the object to the faculty, the quality of the gift to the capacity of the receiver. Now, if Christ should bring the unregenerated sinner to heaven, he could take no more felicity there than a beast would that you should bring into a beautiful room, to the society of learned men, and a well-furnished table ; whereas the poor thing had much rather be grazing with his fellow-brutes. Alas ! what should an unsanctified creature do in heaven ? He could take no content there, because nothing suits him ; the place doth not suit him ; he would be but quite out of his element, as fish out of water ; the company doth not suit him. What communion hath darkness with light ? Corruption with perfection ? The employment doth not suit him ; the anthems of heaven fit not his mouth, suit not his ear. Spread thy table with delicacies before a languishing patient, and it will be a very great offence. Alas ! if the poor man think a sermon long, and say, of a Sabbath-day, “ what a weariness it is !” how miserable would he think it, to be holden to it to all eternity !

5. To his immutability, or else to his omniscieny or omnipotency : for this is enacted in heaven, and enrolled in the decree of the court above, that none but the “ pure in heart shall ever see God.” This is laid up with him, and sealed among his treasures. Now, if Christ yet bring any to heaven unconverted, either he must get them in without his father’s knowledge, (and then where is his omniscieny ?), or against his will, (and then where were his omnipotency ?),

or he must change his will, and then where were his immutability ?

Sinner, wilt thou not give up thy vain hope of being saved in this condition ? Saith Bildad, “ shall the earth be forsaken for thee ? or the rocks moved out of their place ? ” May I not much more reason so with thee ? Shall the laws of heaven be reversed for thee ? Shall the everlasting foundations be overturned for thee ? Shall Christ put out the eye of his Father’s omniscency, or shorten the arm of his eternal power, for thee ? Shall divine justice be violated for thee ? or the brightness of the glory of his holiness be blemished for thee ? O ! the impossibility, absurdity, blasphemy, that are in such a confidence. To think Christ will ever save thee in this condition, is to make thy Saviour become a sinner, and do more wrong to the infinite majesty than all the wicked on earth, or devils in hell, ever did, or could do ; and yet wilt thou not give up such a blasphemous hope ?

II. Against his word. We need not say, “ Who shall ascend into heaven, to bring down Christ from above ? Or, who shall descend into the deep, to bring up Christ from beneath ? The word is nigh us.” Are you agreed that Christ shall end the controversy ? Hear then his own words : “ Except you be converted, you shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.” “ You must be born again.” “ If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me.” “ Repent or perish.” One word, one would think, were enough from Christ ; but how often and earnestly doth he reiterate it ! “ Verily, verily, except a man be born again, he shall not see the kingdom of God.” Yea, he doth not only assert, but prove the necessity of the new birth. And wilt thou yet believe thy own presumptuous confidence, directed against Christ’s words ? He must go quite against the law of his kingdom, and rule of his judgment, to save thee in this state.

III. Against his oath. He hath lifted up his hand to

heaven, he hath sworn, that those that remain in unbelief, and know not his ways, that is, are ignorant of them, or disobedient to them, “ shall not enter into his rest.” And wilt thou not yet believe, O sinner, that he is in earnest ? Canst thou hope he will be foresworn for thee ? The covenant of grace is “ confirmed by an oath,” and sealed by blood ; but all must be made void, and another way to heaven found out, if thou be saved, living and dying unsanctified. God is come to his lowest and last terms with man, and has condescended, as far as in honour he could, and hath set up his pillars with a *ne plus ultra*. Men cannot be saved, while unconverted, except they could get another covenant made, and the whole frame of the gospel, which was established for ever with such dreadful solemnities, quite altered. And would not they be distracted, to hope they shall ?

IV. Against his honour. God will so show his love to the sinner, as withal to show his hatred to sin : therefore “ he that names the name of Jesus must depart from iniquity,” and deny all ungodliness ; and he that hath hope of life by Christ must “ purify himself, as he is pure,” otherwise Christ would be thought a favourer of sin. The Lord Jesus would have all the world to know, that, though he pardons sin, he will not protect it. If holy David shall say, “ depart from me all ye workers of iniquity,” and shall shut the doors against them, shall not such much more expect it from Christ’s holiness ? Would it be for his honour to have the dogs at the table, or lodge the swine with his children, or to have Abraham’s bosom to be a nest of vipers ?

V. Against his offices. God hath “ exalted him to be a Prince and a Saviour.” He would act against both, should he save men in their sins. It is the office of a king, to be “ a terror to evil-doers, and a praise to them that do well.” “ He is a minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath on him that doth evil.” Now, should Christ favour the ungodly, so continuing, and take those to reign with him that “ would

not that he should reign over them," this would be quite against his office ; he therefore reigns, that he may " put his enemies under his feet." Now, should he lay them in his bosom, he would frustrate the end of his regal power : it belongs to Christ, as a king, to subdue the hearts, and slay the lusts of his chosen. What king would take rebels in open hostility into his court ? What were this but to betray life, kingdom, government, and all together ? If Christ be a king, he must have honour, homage, subjection, &c. Now, to save men, while in their natural enmity, were to obscure his dignity, lose his authority, bring contempt on his government, and sell his dear-bought rights for nought.

Again, as Christ would not be a Prince, so neither a Saviour, if he should do this ; for his salvation is spiritual. He is " called Jesus, because he saves his people from their sins," so that, should he save them in their sins, he would be neither Lord nor Jesus. To save men from the punishment, and not from the power of sin, were to do his work by halves, and be an imperfect Saviour. His office, as the deliverer, is, " to turn away ungodliness from Jacob." " He is sent to bless men, in turning them from their iniquities." " To make an end of sin," so that he would destroy his own designs, and nullify his offices, to save men abiding in their unconverted state.

*Application.* Arise then ! What meanest thou, O sleeper ? Awake, O secure sinner ! lest thou be consumed in thine iniquities ; say, as the lepers, " If we sit here we shall die." Verily, it is not more certain that thou art now out of hell, than that thou shall speedily be in it, except thou repent and be converted : there is but this one door for thee to escape by. Arise then, O sluggard ! and shake off thine excuses : how long wilt thou slumber, " and fold thy hands to sleep ?" There is an unchangeable necessity of the change of thy condition, except thou hast resolved to abide the worst of it, and try it out with the Almighty. If thou lovest thy life, O man, rise and come away. Methinks I see

the Lord Jesus laying the merciful hands of a holy violence upon thee ; methinks he carries it like the angels to Lot : " Then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, lest thou be consumed. And, while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, the Lord being merciful unto him, and they brought him without the city, and said, escape for thy life, stay not in all the plains ; escape to the mountains, lest thou be consumed."

O ! how wilful will thy destruction be, if thou shouldst yet harden thyself in thy sinful state ! But none of you can say but you have had fair warning. Yet, methinks, I cannot tell how to leave you so. It is not enough for me to have delivered my own soul. What ! shall I go away without my errand ! Will none of you arise and follow me ? Have I been all this while speaking to the wind ? Do I speak to the trees, or rocks, or to men ? to the tombs or monuments of the dead, or to a living auditory ? If you be men, and not senseless stocks, stand still and consider whither you are going : if you have the reason and understanding of men, dare not to run into the flames, and fall into hell with your eyes open, but bethink yourselves, and set to the work of repentance ! What ! endowed with reason, and yet trifle with death and hell, and the vengeance of the Almighty ! O show yourselves men, and let reason prevail with you. Is it a reasonable thing for you to contend against the Lord your Maker ? " to harden yourselves against his word," as though the strength of Israel would lie ? Is it reasonable that an understanding creature should lose, yea, live quite against, the very end of his being ? Is it reasonable that the only thing in this world that God hath made capable of knowing his will, and bringing him glory, should yet live in ignorance of his Maker, and be unserviceable to his use, yea, should be engaged against him. " Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth," and let the creatures without sense judge if this be reason, that man, whom God hath nourished and brought up, should rebel against him ! Judge in your

own selves : is it a reasonable undertaking for briers and thorns to set themselves in battle against a devouring fire ? or for the potsherd of the earth to strive with its Maker ? You will say, “ This is not reason ; ” or surely the eye of reason is quite put out. And, if this be not reason, then there is no reason, that “ you should continue as you are ; ” but it is all the reason in the world “ you should forthwith turn and repent.”

What shall I say ? I could spend myself in this argument. O ! that you would but hearken unto me ! that you would presently set upon a new course ! Will you not be made clean ! When shall it once be ! What ! will nobody be persuaded ? Reader, shall I prevail with thee for one ? Wilt thou sit down and consider the fore-mentioned argument, and debate it, whether it be not best to turn ? Come, and let us reason together ; is it good for thee to be here ? Wilt thou sit till the tide come in upon thee ? Is it good for thee to try whether God will be so good as his word, and to harden thyself in a conceit that all is well with thee, while thou remainest unsanctified ?

But I know you will not be persuaded, but the greatest part will be as they have been, and do as they have done. I know the drunkard will to his drunkenness again, and the deceiver will to his deceit again, and the licentious to his licentiousness again. Alas ! that I must leave you where you were, in your ignorance, or in your lifeless formality and customary devotions ! However, I will sit down and bemoan my fruitless labours, and spend some sighs over my perishing hearers.

O distracted sinners ! what will their end be ? what will they do in the day of visitation ? “ Whither will they flee for help, where will they leave their glory ? ” How powerfully hath sin bewitched them ! how effectually hath the God of this world blinded them ! how strong is the delusion ! how uncircumcised their ears ! how obdurate their

hearts ! Satan hath them at his call ; but how long may I call, and can get no answer ! I may dispute with them year after year, and they will give me the hearing, and that is all ; they must and will have their sins, say what I will : though I tell them there is death in the cup, yet they will take it up ; though I tell them it is the broad way, and endeth in destruction, yet they will go on in it ; I warn them, yet cannot win them. Sometimes I think the mercies of God will melt them, and his winning invitations will overcome them ; but I find them as they were. Sometimes that the terror of the Lord will persuade them ; yet neither will this do it. They will approve the word, like the sermon, commend the preacher ; but they will yet live as they did. They will not deny me, and yet they will not obey me. They will flock to the word of God, and sit before me as his people, and hear my words, but they will not do them. They value and will plead for ministers, and I am to them as the lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, yet I cannot get them to come under Christ’s yoke. They love me, and will be ready to say, they will do any thing for me ; but, for my life, I cannot persuade them to leave their sins, to forego their evil company, their intemperance, their unjust gains, &c. I cannot prevail with them to set up prayer in their families and closets, yet they will promise me, like the froward son, that said, “ I go, Sir, but went not.” I cannot persuade them to learn the principles of religion, though else, “ they would die without knowledge.” I tell them their misery, but they will not believe, but it is well enough. If I tell them particularly, I fear, for such reasons, their state is bad, they will judge me censorious ; or, if they be at present a little awakened, they are quickly lulled asleep by Satan again, and have lost the sense of all.

Alas ! for my poor hearers, must they perish at last by hundreds, when ministers would so fain save them ? What course shall I use with them that I have not tried ? “ What

shall I do for the daughter of my people ?” “ O Lord God, help ! Alas ! shall I leave them thus ? If they will not hear me, yet do thou hear me. O ! that they may yet live in thy sight ! Lord, save them, or else they perish. My heart would melt to see their houses on fire, when they were fast asleep in their beds ; and shall not my soul be moved within me, to see them falling into endless perdition ? Lord, have compassion, and save them out of the burning : put forth thy divine power, and the work will be done ; but, as for me, I cannot prevail.”

## CHAPTER IV.

### *Showing the Marks of the Unconverted.*

WHILE we keep aloof in generals, there is little fruit to be expected : it is the hand fight that does execution. David is not awakened by the prophet’s hovering at a distance in parabolical insinuations ; he is forced to close with him, and tell him plainly, “ Thou art the man.” Few will in words deny the necessity of the new birth, but they have a self-deluding confidence that the work is not now to do. And because they know themselves free from that gross hypocrisy which takes up religion merely for a colour, to deceive others, and for covering wicked designs, they are confident of their sincerity, and suspect not that more close hypocrisy, (wherein the greatest danger lies), by which a man deceiveth his own soul. But man’s deceitful heart is such a matchless cheat and self-delusion, so reigning and so fatal a disease, that I know not whether be the greater, the difficulty or displacency, or the necessity of the undeceiving work that I am now upon. Alas ! for my unconverted hearers ! they must be undeceived or undone. But how shall this be effected ?

“ Help, O all-searching light, and let thy discerning eye discover the rotten foundation of the self-deceiver ! and lead me, O Lord God, as thou didst the prophets, into the chambers of imagery, and dig through the wall of sinners’ hearts, and discover the hidden abominations that are lurking out of sight in the dark. O ! send thy angel before me, to open the sundry wards of their hearts as thou didst before Peter, and make even the iron gates to fly open of their own accord. And, as Jonathan no sooner tasted the honey than his eyes were enlightened, so grant, O Lord, that, when the poor deceived souls, with whom I have to do, shall cast their eyes upon these lines, their minds may be illuminated, and their consciences convinced and awakened, that they may see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and be converted, and thou mayest heal them.”

This must be premised, before we proceed to the discovery, that it is most certain men may have a confident persuasion that their hearts and states be good, and yet be unsound. Hear the truth himself, who shows, in Laodicea’s case, that men may be wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, and yet not know it ; yea, they may be confident “ they are rich, and increased” in grace. “ There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed from their filthiness.” Who better persuaded of his case than Paul, while he yet remained unconverted ? so that they are miserably deceived that take a strong confidence for a sufficient evidence. They, that have no better proof than barely a strong persuasion that they are converted, are certainly as yet strangers to conversion.

But to come more close. As it was said to the adherents of Antichrist, so here ; some of the unconverted carry their marks in their foreheads more openly, and some in their hands more covertly. The Apostle reckons up some, upon whom he writes the sentence of death ; as in these dreadful catalogues, which I beseech you to attend to with all

diligence. “ For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words : for, because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.” “ But the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone : which is the second death.” “ Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God ? Be not deceived : neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.” Woe to them that have their names written in these rolls ! Such may know, as certainly as if God had told them from heaven, that they are unsanctified ; and under an impossibility of being saved in this condition.

There are then these several sorts that, (past all dispute), are unconverted. They carry their marks in their foreheads.

1. The *Unclean*. These are ever reckoned among the goats, and have their names, (whoever is left out), in all the forementioned catalogues.

2. The *Covetous*. These are ever branded for idolaters, and the doors of the kingdom are shut against them by name, Ephes. v. 5.

3. *Drunkards*. Not only such as drink away their reason, but withal, (yea, above all), such as are too strong for strong drink. The Lord fills his mouth with woes against these, and declares them to have no inheritance in the kingdom of God, Gal. v. 21.

4. *Liars*. The God that cannot lie, has told them, that there is no place for them in his kingdom, no entrance into his hill ; but their portion is with the father of lies, (whose

children they are), in the lake of burnings, Rev. xxi. 8, 27.

5. *Swearers*. The end of these, without deep and speedy repentance, is swift destruction, and most certain and unavoidable condemnation, Zech. v. 3.

6. *Railers* and *backbiters*, that love to take up a reproach against their neighbour, or else wound him secretly behind his back, Psalm xv. 1, 3.

7. *Thieves*, *extortioners*, *oppressors*, that grind the poor, over-reach their brethren when they have them at an advantage. These must know that God “ is the avenger of all such.” Hear, O ye false and purloining and wasteful servants ! hear, O ye deceitful tradesmen, hear your sentence ! God will certainly hold his door against you, and turn your treasures of unrighteousness into the treasures of wrath, and make your ill-gotten silver and gold to torment you, like burning metal in your bowels, James v. 2, 3.

8. *All that do ordinarily live in the profane neglect of God’s worship*, that hear not his word, that call not on his name, that restrain prayer before God, that mind not their own nor their family’s souls, but “ live without God in the world.”

9. *Those that are frequenters and lovers of company*, God hath declared, he will be the destroyer of all such, and that they “ shall never enter into the hill of his rest.” Psalm xv. 4.

10. *Scoffers at religion*, that make a scorn of precise walking, and mock at the messengers and diligent servants of the Lord, and at their holy profession, and make themselves merry with the weakness and failings of professors : “ Hear ye despisers,” hear your dreadful doom, “ Judgments are prepared for scorers, and stripes for the back of fools.”

SINNER, consider diligently whether thou art not to be found in one of these ranks ; for if this be thy case, thou art in the “ gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity :” for all

these do carry their marks in their foreheads, and are undoubtedly excluded from the kingdom of heaven. And, if so, the Lord pity our poor congregations ! O, how small a number will be left, when these ten sorts are left out ! Sirs, what shift do you make to keep up your confidence of your good state, when God from heaven declares against you, and pronounces you in a state of condemnation ? I would reason with you as God with them, “ how canst thou say, I am not polluted ? ” “ See the way in the valley ; know what thou hast done. ” Man, is not thy conscience privy to the tricks of deceit, to thy way of lying ? Yea, are not thy friends, thy family, thy neighbours, witnesses to thy profane neglect of God’s worship, to thy covetous practices, to thy envious and malicious carriage ? May not they point at thee as thou goest ; there goes a gaming prodigal ; there goes a drunken Nabal, a companion of evildoers ; there goes a railer, or a scoffer, or a licentious person ? Beloved, God hath written it as with a sun-beam, in the book by which you must be judged, that these are not the spots of his children, and that none such, except renewed by converting grace, shall ever escape the damnation of hell.

O that such as you would now be persuaded to “ repent, and turn from all your transgressions, or else iniquity will be your ruin ! ” Alas ! for poor hardened sinners ! Must I leave you at last where you were ? However, you must know that you have been warned, and that I am clear of your blood ; and, whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear, I will leave these Scriptures with them, either as thunder-bolts to awaken them, or as searing irons to harden them to a reprobate sense. “ God shall wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of such a one as goeth on still in his trespasses. ” “ He that, being often reprov’d, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. ” “ Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded. I will mock at your calamity, when your destruction cometh as a

whirlwind ! ”

And now I imagine many will begin to bless themselves, and think all is well, because they cannot be spotted with the grosser evils before mentioned ; but I must farther tell you, that there is another sort of unsanctified persons that carry not their marks in their foreheads, but more secretly and covertly, in their hands : these do frequently deceive themselves and others, and pass for good Christians, when they are all the while unsound at heart. Many “ pass undiscovered, till death and judgment bring all to light. Those self-deceivers seem to come even to heaven’s gate with confidence of their admission, and yet are turned off at last. Brethren, beloved, I beseech you deeply to lay to heart, and firmly retain this awakening consideration, “ that multitudes miscarry by the hand of some secret sin, that is not only hidden from others, but, for want of observing their own hearts, even from themselves. ” A man may be free from open pollutions, and yet die at last by the fatal hand of some unobserved iniquity ; and there are these twelve hidden sins, through which souls go down by numbers into the chambers of death ; these you must search carefully for, and take them as marks (wherever they be found) discovering a graceless and unconverted state ; and, as you love your lives, read carefully, with a holy jealousy of yourselves, lest you should be the persons concerned.

1. *Gross ignorance.* O, how many poor souls doth this sin kill in the dark !—“ My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge : because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee ”—while they think verily they have good hearts, and are in the ready way to heaven. This is the murderer that despatcheth thousands in a silent manner, when (poor hearts !) they suspect nothing, and see not the hand that injures them. You shall find, whatever excuses you have for ignorance, that it is a soul-undoing evil : “ For it is a people of no understanding : therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed



them will show them no favour.” Ah ! would it not have grieved a man’s heart to have seen that woeful spectacle, when the “ poor Protestants were shut up, a multitude together in a barn, and a butcher came, with his inhuman hands warmed in human blood, and led them one by one, blindfold, to a block, where he slew them (poor innocents !) one after another, by scores, in cool blood ? But how much more should your hearts bleed to think of the hundreds, in great congregations, that ignorance doth kill in secret, and lead blindfold to the block ! Beware this be none of your case. Make no plea for ignorance ; if you spare that sin, know that it will not spare you ; and would a man keep a murderer in his bosom ?

2. *Secret reserves in closing with Christ.* To forsake all for Christ, to hate father and mother, yea, a man’s own life, for him, “ this is a hard saying.” Some will do much, but they will not be of the religion that will undo them ; they never come to be entirely devoted to Christ, nor fully to resign to him ; they must have the sweet sin : they mean to do themselves no harm : they have secret exceptions for life, liberty, or estate. Many take Christ thus, and never consider his self-denying terms, nor cast up the cost ; and this error in the foundation mars all, and secretly ruins them for ever.

3. *Formality in religion.* Many rest in the outside of religion, and in the external performances of holy duties. And this, oftentimes, doth most effectually deceive men, and doth more certainly undo them than open wickedness ; as it was in the Pharisee’s case. They hear, they fast, they pray, they give alms, and therefore will not believe but their case is good. Whereas, resting in the work done, and coming short of the heart-work and the inward power and vitals of religion, they fall at last into the burning, from the flattering hopes and confident persuasions of their being in the ready way to heaven. O dreadful case, when a man’s religion shall serve only to harden him, and effectually to

delude and deceive his own soul !

4. *The prevalence of false ends in holy duties.* This was the bane of the Pharisees. O, how many a poor soul is undone by this, and drops into hell before he discerns his mistake ! he performs “ good duties,” and so thinks all is well, but perceives not that he is actuated by carnal motives all the while. It is too true, that, even with the truly sanctified, many carnal ends will oft-times creep in ; but they are the matter of his hatred and humiliation, and never come to be habitually prevalent with him, and bear the greatest sway. But now, when the main thing that doth ordinarily carry a man out to religious duties shall be really some cardinal end, as to satisfy his conscience, to get the repute of being religious, “ to be seen of men,” to show his own gifts and parts, to avoid the reproach of a profane and irreligious person, or the like ; this discovers an unsound heart. O Christian ! if you would avoid self-deceit, see that you mind not only your acts, but withal (yea above all) your ends.

5. *Trusting in their own righteousness.* This is a soul-undoing mischief. When men do trust in their own righteousness, they do indeed reject Christ’s. Beloved, you had need be watchful on every hand ; for, not only your sins, but your duties, may undo you. It may be you never thought of this, but so it is, that a man may as certainly miscarry by his seeming righteousness and supposed graces as by gross sins ; and that is when a man doth trust to these as his righteousness before God, for the satisfying his justice, appeasing his wrath, procuring his favour, and obtaining of his own pardon ; for this is to put Christ out of office, and make a Saviour of our own duties and graces. Beware of this, O professors ! you are much in duties, but this one fly will spoil all the ointment. When you have done most and best, be sure go out of yourselves to Christ ; reckon your own righteousness but rags.

6. *A secret enmity against the strictness of religion.* Many moral persons, punctual in their formal devotions, have a

bitter enmity against preciseness ; and hate the life and power of religion. They like not this forwardness, nor that men should keep such a stir in religion ; they condemn the strictness of religion as singularity, indiscretion, and intemperate zeal ; and with them a lively preacher, or lively Christian, is but a heady fellow. These men love not holiness as holiness, (for then they would love the height of holiness), and therefore are undoubtedly rotten at heart, whatever good opinion they have of themselves.

7. *The resting in a certain pitch of religion.* When they have so much as will save them, (as they suppose), they look no farther, and so show themselves short of true grace, which will ever put men upon aspiring to farther perfection.

8. *The predominant love of the world.* This is the sure evidence of an unsanctified heart. “ If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

But how close doth this sin lurk oft-times under the fair covert of forward profession ! Yea, such a power of deceit is there in this sin, that many times, when every body else can see the man’s worldliness and covetousness, he cannot see it himself, but hath so many colours, and excuses, and pretences, for his eagerness on the world, that he doth blind his own eyes, and perish in his self-deceit. How many professors are there with whom the world hath more of their hearts and affections than Christ, “ who mind earthly things,” and thereby are evidently after the flesh, and like to end in destruction ! Yet ask these men, and they will tell you confidently, they prize Christ above all ; (God forbid else !) and see not their own earthly mindedness, for want of a narrow observation of the workings of their own hearts. Did they but carefully search, they would quickly find that their greatest content is in the world, and their greatest care and main endeavour are to get and secure the world ; which are the certain discoveries of an unconverted sinner. May the professing part of the world take earnest heed that they perish not by the hand of this sin unobserved. Men may be,

and often are, kept off from Christ as effectually by the inordinate love of lawful comforts, as by the most unlawful courses. “ But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise.”

9. *Reigning malice and envy* against those that disrespect them and are injurious to them. O ! how do many, that seem to be religious, remember injuries and carry grudges, and will return men as good as they bring, rendering evil for evil, loving to take revenge, wishing evil to them that wrong them, directly against the rule of the Gospel, the pattern of Christ, and the nature of God. Doubtless, where this evil is kept boiling in the heart, and is not hated, resisted, mortified, but doth habitually prevail, that person is in the very gall of bitterness, and in a state of death.

Reader, doth nothing of this touch thee ? Art thou in none of the fore-mentioned ranks ? O search and search again ; take thy heart solemnly to task. Woe unto thee, if, after thy profession, thou shouldst be found under the power of ignorance, lost in formality, drowned in earthly mindedness, envenomed with malice, exalted in an opinion of thine own righteousness, leavened with hypocrisy and carnal ends in God’s service, embittered against strictness ; this would be a sad discovery, that all thy religion were in vain. But I must proceed.

10. *Unmortified pride.* When men love the praise of men more than the praise of God, and set their hearts upon men’s esteem, applause, and approbation, it is most certain that they are yet in their sins, and strangers to true conversion. When men see not, nor complain, nor groan under the pride of their own hearts, it is a sign they are dead in sin. O, how secretly doth this sin live and reign in many hearts, and they know it not, but are very strangers to themselves !

11. *The prevailing love of pleasure.* This is a deep mark. When men give the flesh the liberty that it craves, and pamper and please it, and do not deny and restrain it ; when

their great delight is in pleasing their senses, whatever appearances they may have of religion, all is unsound. A flesh-pleasing life cannot be pleasing to God. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh," and are careful to cross it and keep it under, as their enemy.

12. *Carnal security*, or a presumptuous confidence that their condition is already good. Many cry, peace and safety, when "sudden destruction is coming upon them." This was that which kept the foolish virgins sleeping when they should have been at the market. They perceived not their want of oil till the bridegroom was come ; and, while they went to buy, the door was shut. And, O ! that these foolish virgins had no successors ! Where is the place, yea, where is the house almost, where these do not dwell ? Men are willing to cherish in themselves, upon ever so light grounds, a hope that their condition is good, and so look not out after a change, and by these means perish in their sins. Are ye at peace ? Show me upon what grounds your peace is maintained. Is it Scripture peace ? Can you show the distinguishing marks of a sound believer ? Can you evidence that you have something more than any hypocrite in the world ever had ? If not, fear this peace more than any trouble ; and know that a carnal peace doth commonly prove the most mortal enemy of the soul, and, whilst it smiles and speaks it fair, doth fatally betray it.

By this time, I think I hear my readers crying out with the disciples, "Who then shall be saved ?" Set out from among our congregations all those ten ranks of the profane on the one hand, and then besides take out all these twelve sorts of close and self-deceiving hypocrites on the other, and then tell me whether it be not a remnant that shall be saved ? How few will be the sheep that shall be left, when all these shall be separated and set among the goats ! For my part, of all my numerous hearers, I have no hope to see any of them in heaven that are to be found among these two-and-twenty sorts that are here mentioned, except by

sound conversion they are brought into another condition.

*Application.* And now, conscience, do thy office ; speak out, and speak home, to him that heareth or readeth these lines. If thou find any of these marks upon him, thou must pronounce him utterly unclean. Take not a lie into thy mouth ; speak not peace to him to whom God speaks no peace. Let not sense bribe thee, or self-love blind thee. I summon thee, from the court of heaven, to come and give in evidence. As thou wilt answer it at thy peril, give in a true report of the state and case of him that readeth this book. Conscience, wilt thou altogether hold thy peace at such a time as this ? "I adjure thee by the living God that thou tell us the truth !" Is the man converted, or is he not ? Doth he allow himself in any way of sin, or doth he not ? Doth he truly love, and please, and prize, and delight in God above all other things, or not ? Come, put it to an issue.

How long shall this soul live in uncertainty ? O conscience, bring in thy verdict. Is this man a new man, or is he not ? Hath there passed a thorough and mighty change upon him, or not ? When was the time, or what were the means by which this thorough change of the new birth was wrought in his soul ? Speak, conscience ; or if thou canst not tell the time and place, canst thou show Scripture evidence that the work is done ? Hath the man been ever taken off from the false hopes, and false peace, wherein he once trusted ? Hath he been deeply convinced of sin, and of his lost and undone condition, and brought out of himself, to give up himself entirely to Jesus Christ ? or dost thou not find him to this day under the power of ignorance or profaneness ? Hast thou, not found on him the gains of unrighteousness ? Dost thou not find him a stranger to prayer, a neglecter of the word, a lover of this present world ? Speak plainly to all the fore-mentioned particulars. Canst thou acquit this man from being any of the two-and-twenty sorts here described ? If he be found

with any of them, set him aside : his portion is not with the saints. He must be converted and made a new creature, or else he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

Beloved, be not your own betrayers ; do not deceive your own hearts, nor set your hands to your own ruin by a wilful blindness of yourselves. Set up a tribunal in your own breasts : bring the word and conscience together, “ to the law and to the testimony.” Hear what the word concludes of your states. O follow the search till you have found how the case stands. Mistake here, and perish. And, such is the treachery of the heart, the subtilty of the tempter, and “ the deceitfulness of sin,” all conspire to flatter and deceive the poor soul ; and withal so common and easy it is to mistake, that it is a thousand to one but you will be deceived unless you be very careful, and thorough, and impartial, in the inquiry into your spiritual condition. O, therefore, weigh yourselves in the balance ; come to the standard of the sanctuary ; bring your coin to the touch-stone. Satan is master of deceit ; he can draw to the life : there is nothing but he can imitate. You cannot wish for any grace, but he can fit you with a counterfeit. Be jealous : trust not so much as your own hearts. Run to God to search you and try you, “ to examine you and prove your reins.” If other helps suffice not to bring all to an issue, but you are still at a loss, open your cases faithfully to some godly and faithful minister. Rest not till you have put the business of your eternal welfare out of question. “ O Searcher of hearts, put this soul upon, and help him in, his search.”

## CHAPTER V.

*Showing the Miseries of the Unconverted.*

So unspeakably dreadful is the case of every unconverted

soul, that I have sometimes thought, if I could but convince men that they are yet unregenerate, the work were done.

But I sadly experience, that such a spirit of sloth and slumber possesseth the unsanctified, that, though they be convinced that they are yet unconverted, yet they oft-times carelessly sit still ; and what through the indulgence of sensual pleasure, or hurry of worldly business, or earthly cares and affections, the voice of conscience is drowned, and men go no farther than some cold wishes, and general purposes of repenting and amending.

It is therefore of high necessity that I do not only convince men that they are unconverted, but that I also endeavour to bring them to a sense of the fearful misery of this state.

But here I find myself a-ground at first putting forth. What tongue can tell the heirs of hell sufficiently of their misery, unless it were Dives, in that flame ? Where is the ready writer, whose pen can decipher their misery that are “ without God in the world ?” This cannot fully be done, unless we know the infinite ocean of that bliss of perfection which is in that God, from which a state of sin doth exclude men. “ Who knoweth,” saith Moses, “ the power of thine anger ?” And how shall I tell men that which I do not know ? Yet so much we know as, one would think, would shake the heart of that man that had the least degree of spiritual life and sense.

But this is yet the greatest difficulty, that I am to speak to them that are without sense. Alas ! this is not the least part of man’s misery, that he is dead—“ dead, in trespasses and sins.”

Could I bring paradise into view, or represent the kingdom of heaven to as much advantage as the tempter did the kingdoms of the world, and all the glory thereof, to our Saviour ; or could I uncover the face of the deep and devouring gulf of Tophet, in all its terrors, and open the gates of the eternal prison ; alas ! he hath no eyes to see it.

Could I paint out the beauties of holiness, or glory of the gospel, to the life ; or could I bring above-board the more than diabolical deformity of sin ; he can no more judge of the loveliness and beauty of the one, and the hatefulness of the other, than the blind man of colours. He is “ alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in him,” because of the blindness of his heart. He neither doth nor can know “ the things of God, because they are spiritually discerned.” His eyes cannot be savingly opened but by converting grace. He is a child of darkness, “ and walks in darkness :” yea, the light in him is darkness.

Shall I read his sentence, or sound in his ear the terrible trump of God’s judgments, that one would think should make both his ears to tingle, and strike him into Belshazzar’s fit, even to appal his countenance, and loose his joints, and make his knees smite one against another ? Yet, alas ! he perceives me not ; he hath no ears to hear. Or shall I call up the daughters of music, and sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb ? Yet he will not be stirred. Shall I allure him with the joyful sound, and glad tidings of the gospel ? with the most sweet and inviting calls, comforts, cordials, of the divine promises, so exceedingly great and precious ? It will not affect him savingly, unless I could find him ears, as well as tell him the news.

What then shall I do ? Alas ! dead sinners are like the dumb idols ; “ they have mouths, but they speak not ; eyes have they, but they see not ; they have ears, but they hear not ; noses have they, but they smell not ; they have hands, but they handle not ; feet have they, but they walk not ; neither speak they through their throat”—they are destitute of spiritual sense and motion.

But let me try the sense that doth last leave us, and draw the sword of the word ; yea, lay at him while I will ; yea, though I choose mine arrows out of God’s quiver, and direct them to the heart, nevertheless he feeleth it not : for how should he, being past feeling ? So that, though “ the

wrath of God abideth on him,” and the mountainous weight of so many thousand sins, yet he goes up and down as light as if nothing ailed him. In a word, he carries a dead soul in a living body.

Which way, then, shall I come at the miserable objects that I have to deal with ? Who shall make the heart of stone to relent ? or the lifeless carcase to feel and move ? That God that is able of “ stone to raise up children unto Abraham ;” that “ raiseth the dead,” and “ melteth the mountains,” and “ strikes water out of the flints ;” that loves to work like himself, beyond the hopes and belief of man ; that peopleth his church with dry bones—he is able to do this. Therefore, “ I bow my knee to the Most High God,” and as our Saviour prayed at the sepulchre of Lazarus, and the Shunamite ran to the man of God for her dead child, so doth your mourning minister carry you in the arms of prayer to that God in whom your help is found.

“ O thou all-powerful Jehovah, that worketh and none can let thee ! that hast the keys of death and hell ; pity thou the dead souls that lie here entombed, and roll away the gravestone, and say, as to Lazarus when already dead. Come forth. Lighten thou this darkness, O inaccessible light ! and let the day spring from on high visit the dark regions of the dead, to whom I speak ; for thou canst open the eye that death itself hath closed ; thou, that formedst the ear, canst restore the hearing : say thou to these ears, Ephphatha, and they shall be opened. Give thou eyes to see thine excellencies, a taste that may relish thy sweetness, a scent that may savour thy ointment, a feeling that may discern the privilege of thy favour, the burden of thy wrath, the intolerable weight of unpardoned sin, and give thy servants order to prophesy on the dry bones, and let the effects of this prophesy be as of thy prophet, when he prophesied the valley of dry bones into a living army exceeding great.” “ The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me

down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones. He said to me, Prophecy on these bones, and say to them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord unto these bones, Behold I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live : and I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh on you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live ; and ye shall know that I am the Lord. So I prophesied as I was commanded ; and as I prophesied, there was a noise and a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And, when I beheld, lo ! the sinews and flesh came up on them, and the skin covered them above, but there was no breath in them. Then said he unto me. Prophecy unto the wind, prophecy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God, come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army.” But I must proceed, as I am able, to unfold that mystery, which, I confess, no tongue can unfold, no heart can sufficiently comprehend. Know therefore that, while thou art unconverted,

I. *The Infinite God is engaged against thee.* It is no small part of thy misery that thou art “without God.” How doth Micah run crying after the Danites, “You have taken away my gods, and what have I more ?” O what a mourning then must thou lift up, that art without God, that canst lay no claim to him without daring usurpation !

Thou mayest say of God, as Sheba of David, “we have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse.” How pitiful and piercing a moan is that of Saul in his extremity ! “The Philistines are upon me, and God is departed from me !” Sinners, but what will you do in the day of your visitation ? Whither will you flee for help ? Where will you leave your glory ? What will you do when the Philistines are upon you ; when the world shall take its

eternal leave of you ; when you must bid your friends, houses, and lands, farewell for evermore ? What will you do then, I say, that have never a God to go to ? Will you call on him ? Will you cry to him ? Alas, he will not own you, he will not take any notice of you, but send you packing with an “I never knew you.” They that know what it is to have a God to go to, a God to live upon, they know a little what a fearful misery it is to be without God. This made that holy man cry out, “Let me have a God, or nothing ; let me know him, and his will, and what will please him, and how I may come to enjoy him, or would I had never had an understanding to know any thing !”

But thou art not only without God, but God is “against thee.” O ! if God would but stand neuter, though he did not own nor help the poor sinner, his case were not so deeply miserable, though God should give up the poor creature to the will of his enemies, to do their worst with him : though he should deliver him over to the tormentors, yet this were not half so fearful. But God will set himself against the sinner ; and, believe it, it is a fearful “thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” There is no friend like him, no enemy like him. As much as heaven is above the earth, omnipotence above impotence, so much more terrible it is to fall into the hands of the living God, than into the power of devils. God himself will be thy tormentor ; thy destruction shall come “from the presence of the Lord.” Tophet is deep and large, and the wrath of the Lord, like a river of brimstone, doth kindle it. “If God be against thee, who shall be for thee ? If one man sin against another, they judge him : but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him ?” “Thou, even thou, art to be feared ; and who shall stand in thy sight when once thou art angry ?” “Who is that god that shall deliver you out of his hands ?” Can mammon ? “riches profit not in the day of wrath.” Can kings or warriors ? No : “They shall cry to the mountains and rocks to fall on them and hide them

from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb ; for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand ?”

Sinner ! I think this should go like a dagger to thy heart, to know that God is thine enemy. O ! whither wilt thou go ? where wilt thou shelter thee ? There is no hope for thee, unless thou lay down thy weapons, and sue out thy pardon, and get Christ to stand thy friend, and make thy peace. If it were not for this, thou mightest pine in sorrow and horrible despair ; but in Christ there is a possibility of mercy for thee, yea, a proffer of mercy to thee, that thou mayest have God more for thee than he is now against thee : but if thou wilt not forsake thy sins, nor turn thoroughly and to some purpose to God, by a sound conversion, the wrath of God abideth on thee, and he proclaimeth himself to be against thee, as in the prophet. “ Therefore thus saith the Lord God, behold I, even I, am against thee !”

1. *His face is against thee.* “ The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them.” Woe unto them whom God shall set his face against ! When he did but look on the host of the Egyptians, how terrible was the consequence ! “ I will set my face against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb, and will cut him off from the midst of my people, and you shall know that I am the Lord.”

2. *His heart is against thee.* He hateth all the workers of iniquity. Man, doth not thy heart tremble to think of thy being an object of God’s hatred ? Though Moses and Samuel “ stood before me, yet my mind could not be towards this people : cast them out of my sight.” “ My soul loathed them, and their souls also abhorred me.”

3. *His hand is against thee.* All his attributes are against thee.

First, *His justice is like a flaming sword unsheathed against thee* : “ If I whet my glittering sword, and my hand take hold on

judgment, I will render vengeance to mine adversaries, and will reward them that hate me ; and I will make mine arrows drunk with blood.”

So exact is justice, that it “ will by no means clear the guilty.” God will not discharge thee, “ he will not hold thee guiltless,” but will require the whole debt in person of thee, unless thou canst make a scripture claim to Christ, and his satisfaction. When the enlightened sinner looks on justice, and sees the balance in which he must be weighed, and the sword by which he must be executed, he feels an earthquake in his breast : but Satan keeps this out of sight, and persuades the soul, while he can, that the Lord is all made up of mercy, and so lulls it asleep in sin. Divine justice is very strict ; it must have satisfaction to the utmost farthing ; it denounceth “ indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, to every soul that doeth evil.” It curseth “ every one that continueth not in every thing that is written in the law, to do it.” The justice of God to the unpardoned sinner, that hath a sense of his guilt, is more terrible than the sight of the judge and bench to the robber, or of the irons and gibbet to the guilty murderer. When justice sits upon life and death, O what dreadful work doth it make to the wretched sinner ! “ Bind him hand and foot ; cast him into outer darkness ; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” “ Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.” This is the terrible sentence that justice pronounceth. Why, sinner, by this severe justice must thou be tried ; and as God liveth, this killing sentence shalt thou hear, unless thou repent and be converted.”

Secondly, *The holiness of God is full of antipathy against thee.* He is not only angry with thee, (so he may be with his own children), but he hath a fixed, rooted, habitual, displeasure against thee ; God’s nature is infinitely contrary to sin, and so he cannot but hate a sinner out of Christ.

O what misery is this, to be out of the favour, yea, under the hatred of God ! that God, who can as easily lay aside his

nature, and cease to be God, as not be contrary to thee and detest thee, except thou be changed and renewed by grace. O sinner, how darest thou to think of the bright and radiant sun of purity, or the beauties, the glory, of holiness, that is in God ? “ The stars are not pure in his sight.” “ He humbles himself to behold things that are done in heaven.” And hast thou no interest in Christ neither, that he should plead for thee ; I think he should hear thee crying out, astonished, with the Bethshemites, “ Who shall stand before this Lord God ?”

Thirdly, *The power of God is against thee.* The glory of God’s power is to be displayed in the wonderful confusion and destruction of them “ that obey not the gospel.” He will “ make his power known in them ;” how mightily he can torment them : for this end he raiseth them up, “ that he might make his power known.” O man, art thou able to make thy party good with thy Maker ?

Sinner, the “ power of God’s anger” is against thee, and power and anger together make fearful work ; it were better thou hadst all the world in arms against thee, than to have the power of God against thee. There is no escaping his hands, no breaking his prison. “ The thunder of his power who can withstand ?” Unhappy man, that shall understand it by feeling it ! “ If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand. He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength ; who hath hardened himself against him, and prospered ? which removeth the mountains, and they know it not ; which overturneth them in his anger ; which shaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble ; which commanded the sun, and it riseth not, and sealeth up the stars ! Behold, he taketh away, who can hinder him ? Who will say unto him, What doest thou ? If God will not withdraw his anger, the proud helpers do stoop under him.” And art thou a fit match for such an antagonist ? “ Oh ! consider this, you that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you.”

Submit to mercy ; let not dust and stubble stand out against the Almighty ; set not briers and thorns in battle, lest he go through them, and consume them together ; but lay hold on his strength that you may “ make peace with him.” “ Woe to him that striveth with his Maker !”

Fourthly, *The “wisdom of God is set to ruin thee.* He hath ordained his arrows, and prepared instruments of death, and made all things ready. His counsels are against thee to contrive thy destruction. “ The Lord shall laugh at him, for he seeth that the day is coming.” He sees how thou wilt come down mightily in a moment ; how thou wilt gnash thy teeth, for anguish and astonishment of heart, when thou seest thou art fallen remedilessly into the pit of destruction.

Fifthly, *The truth of God is sworn against thee.* If he be true and faithful, thou must perish if thou goest on. Unless he be false of his word, thou must die except thou repent. If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful : he cannot deny himself. That is, he is faithful to his threatenings, as well as promises, and will show his faithfulness in our confusion, if we believe not. God hath told thee, as plain as it can be spoken, that “ if he wash thee not, thou hast no part in him”—that, “ if thou livest after the flesh, thou shalt die”—that, “ except thou be converted, thou shalt in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven :” and he abideth faithful ; he cannot deny himself. Beloved, as the immutable faithfulness of God in his promise and oath affords believers strong consolation, so they are to unbelievers for strong consternation and confusion. O sinner, tell me, what shift dost thou make to think of all the threatenings of God’s word, that stand upon record against thee ? Dost thou believe they are truth or not ? if not, thou art a wretched infidel, and not a Christian ; and therefore, give over the name and hopes of a Christian. But, if thou dost believe them, O heart of adamant that thou hast, that canst walk up and down in quiet, when the truth and faithfulness of God are engaged



to destroy thee ! so that, if the Almighty can do it, thou shalt surely perish. Why, man, the whole “book of God” doth testify against thee, while thou remainest unsanctified : it condemns thee in every leaf, and is to thee like Ezekiel’s roll, written within and without with “lamentation, and mourning, and woe.” And all this shall surely come upon thee and overtake thee, except thou repent. “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but one jot or tittle of this word shall never pass away.”

Now, put all this together, and tell me if the case of the unconverted be not deplorably miserable. As we read of some persons, that had bound themselves in an oath, and in a curse, to kill Paul, so thou must know, O sinner, to thy terror, that all the attributes of an infinite God are bound in an oath to destroy thee. O man, what wilt thou do ? whither wilt thou flee ? If God’s omniscience can find thee, thou shalt not escape : if the true and faithful God will save his oath, perish thou must, except thou believe and repent : if the Almighty hath power to torment thee, thou shalt be perfectly miserable in soul and body to all eternity, unless it be prevented by speedy conversion.

II. *The whole creation of God is against thee.* “The whole creation,” saith Paul, “groaneth and travaileth in pain.” But what is it that the creation groaneth under ? why, the fearful abuse that it is subject to, in serving the lust of unsanctified men. And what is it that the creation groaneth for ? why, for freedom and liberty from this abuse, for the “creature is very unwillingly subject to this bondage.” If the unreasonable and inanimate creatures had speech and reason, they would cry out under it as a bondage unsufferable, to be abused by the ungodly, contrary to their natures and the ends that the great Creator made them for. It is a passage of an eminent divine, “The liquor that the drunkard drinketh, if it had reason as well as a man to know how shamefully it is abused and spoiled, it would groan in the cup against him, groan in

his throat, in his belly, against him. And, if God should open the mouths of his creatures, as he did the mouth of Balaam’s ass, the proud man’s garment on his back would groan against him. There is never a creature, but, if it had reason to know how it is abused till a man be converted, would groan against him ; the land would groan to bear him ; the air would groan to give him breathing ; their houses would groan to lodge them ; their beds would groan to ease them, their food to nourish them, their clothes to cover them, and the creature would groan to give them any help and comfort, so long as they live in sin against God.” Thus far he.

I think this should be a terror to an unconverted soul, to think he is a burden to the creation : “Cut it down ; why cumbereth it the ground !” If the poor inanimate creatures could but speak, they would say to the ungodly, as Moses to Israel, “Must we fetch you water out of the rock, ye rebels ?” “Thy food would say. Lord, must I nourish such a wretch as this, and yield forth my strength for him to dishonour thee withal ? The very air would say. Lord, must I give this man breath to set his tongue against heaven, and scorn thy people, and vent out oaths and blasphemy against thee ? His poor beast would say. Lord, must I carry him upon his wicked design ?” A wicked man ! the earth groans under him, and hell groans for him, till death satisfies both. While the Lord of Hosts is against thee, be sure the Host of the Lord is against thee, and all the creatures, as it were, up in arms, till, upon a man’s conversion, the controversy being taken up between God and him, he makes a covenant of peace with the creature for him.

III. *The roaring lion hath his full power upon thee.* Thou art fast to the paw of the lion that is greedy to devour ; in “the snare of the devil, led captive by him at his will.” This is the “spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience.” He is the “ruler of the darkness of this world,” that is, of ignorant sinners that live in darkness. You pity the poor

Indians that worship the devil for their God, but little think it is your own case. Why, it is the common misery of all the unsanctified, that the devil is their God. Not that they do intend to do him homage and worship ; they will be ready to defy him, and him that should say so by them ; but all this while they serve him, and come and go at his will, and live under his government : “ His servants you are to whom ye yield yourselves to obey.” O, how many then will be found the real servants of the devil, that take themselves for no other than the children of God ! He can no sooner offer a sinful delight or opportunity for your unlawful advantage, than you embrace it. If he suggest a lie or prompt you to revenge, you readily obey : if he forbid you to read or pray, you hearken to him, and therefore his servants you are. Indeed, he acts in the dark, and sinners see not who setteth them on work, but all the while he leads them. Doubtless the liar intends not a service to Satan, but his own advantage ; yet it is he that stands unobserved, and putteth the thing in his heart. Questionless, Judas when he sold his Master for money, and the Chaldeans and Sabeans when they plundered Job, intended not to do the devil a pleasure, but to satisfy their own covetous thirst ; yet it was he that actuated them in their wickedness. Men may be very slaves of the devil, and not know it : nay, they may please themselves in the thoughts of happy liberty.

Art thou yet in ignorance, and not turned from darkness to light ? Why thou art under the power of Satan. Dost thou live in the ordinary and wilful practice of any known sin ? know that thou art of the devil. Dost thou live in strife, or envy, or malice ? Verily he is thy father. O dreadful case ! However Satan may provide his slaves with divers pleasures, yet it is but to deceive them into endless perdition. The serpent comes with the apple in his mouth, O ! but, with Eve, thou seest not the deadly sting in his tail. He that is now thy tempter will one day be thy tormentor. O, that I could but give thee to see how bad a master thou

servest, how merciless a tyrant thou gratifiest, all whose pleasure is to set thee on work to make thy perdition and damnation sure, and to heat the furnace hotter and hotter in which thou must burn for millions and millions of ages.

IV. *The guilt of all thy sins lies like a mountain upon thee.* Poor soul ! thou feelest it not ; but this is that which seals thy misery upon thee. While unconverted, none of thy sins are blotted out, they are all upon record against thee. Regeneration and remission are never separated ; the unsanctified are unquestionably unjustified and unpardoned. Look upon an enlightened sinner, who feels the weight of his own guilt : O, how frightful are his looks, how fearful are his complaints ! his comforts are turned into wormwood, and his moisture into drought, and his sleep is departed from his eyes. He is a terror to himself and all that are about him ; and is ready to envy the very stones that lie in the street, because they are senseless, and feel not his misery : and wisheth he had been a dog, rather than a man, because then death had put an end to his misery ; whereas now it will be but the beginning of that which will know no ending.

How light soever you may make of it now, you will one day find the guilt of an unpardoned sin to be a heavy burden. This is a mill-stone, that “ whosoever falleth upon it, shall be broken : but upon whomsoever it shall fall it shall grind him to powder.” What work did it make with our blessed Saviour ! It pressed the very blood, to a wonder, out of his veins, and broke all his bones : and, if it did this in the green tree, what will it do in the dry.

O ! think of thy case in time. Canst thou think of that threat without trembling, “ Ye shall die in your sins.” O ! better were it for thee to die in a dungeon, than die in thy sins. If death, as it will take away all thy other comforts, would take away thy sins too, it were some mitigation ; but thy sins will follow thee when thy friends leave thee, and all worldly enjoyments shake hands with thee. Thy sins will

not die with thee, as a prisoner's other debts will ; but they will to judgment with thee, there to be thy accusers ; and they will to hell with thee, there to be thy tormentors. O, the work that these will make thee ! O, look over thy debts in time—how is every one of God's commandments ready to arrest thee, and take thee by the throat, for the innumerable bonds it hath upon thee ! What wilt thou do then, when they shall all together come in against thee ? Hold open the eyes of conscience to consider this, that thou mayest despair of thyself, and be driven to Christ and fly for refuge, to “ lay hold on the hope that is set before thee.”

V. *Thy raging lusts do miserably enslave thee.* While unconverted, thou art a very servant to sin ; it reigns over thee, and holds thee under its dominion till thou art brought within the bonds of God's covenant. Now, there is no such another tyrant as sin : O the vile and fearful work that it doth engage its servants in ! Would it not pierce a man's heart to see a company of poor creatures drudging and toiling, and all to carry together faggots and fuel for their own burning ? Why this is the employment of sin's drudges : even while they bless themselves in their unrighteous gains, while they sing and swim in pleasure, they are but treasuring up wrath and vengeance for their eternal burning. Who would serve such a master, whose wages are death ?

What a woeful spectacle was the poor wretch that was possessed with the legion ! Would it not have grieved thy heart to have seen him among the tombs cutting and wounding himself ? This is thy case ; such is thy work ; every stroke is a thrust at thy heart. Conscience indeed is now asleep ; but when death and judgment shall bring thee to thy senses, then wilt thou feel the raging smart and anguish in every wound. The convinced sinner is a sensible instance of the miserable bondage of sin : conscience flies upon him, and tells him what the end of these things will be

; and yet such a slave he is to his lust, that on he must, though he sees it will be his endless perdition ; and, when the temptation comes, it breaks the cords of all his vows and promises, and carries him headlong to his own destruction.

VI. *The furnace of eternal vengeance is heated ready for thee.* Hell and destruction open their mouths upon thee ; waiting, as it were, as thou standest upon the brink, when thou wilt drop in. If the wrath of men be “ as the roaring of a lion,” “ more heavy than the sand,” what is the wrath of the infinite God ! if the burning furnace heated in Nebuchadnezzar's fiery rage, when he commanded it to be made yet seven times hotter, was so fierce as to burn up even those that drew near it to throw the children in, how hot is that burning furnace of the Almighty's fury ! surely this is seventy times seven more fierce. “ Can thy heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the day that I will deal with thee, saith the Lord of hosts ?” “ Canst thou abide the everlasting burnings ? Canst thou dwell with consuming fire ?” The most patient man that ever was, did curse the day that ever he was born, and even wish death to come and end his misery, when God did but let out one little drop of his wrath ; how then wilt thou endure when God shall pour out all his vials, and set himself against thee, to torment thee ? when immortality shall be thy misery ; and to die the death of a brute, and be swallowed in the gulph of annihilation, shall be such a felicity as the whole eternity of wishes, and an ocean of tears, shall never purchase ? Now thou canst “ put off the evil day,” and canst “ laugh and be merry, and forget the terror of the Lord,” but how wilt thou hold out, or hold up, when God will cast thee into a “ bed of torments,” and make thee “ to lie down in sorrow ?” when “ the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation,” shall be thy only drink ? In a word, when the smoke of thy torment shall ascend for ever and ever, and thou shalt have no rest night nor day, no rest in thy

conscience ; but thou shalt be an execration, and an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach, for evermore ?

O sinner ! stop here and consider : if thou art a man, and not a senseless block, consider ! Bethink thyself where thou standest ! why, upon the very brink of destruction. “ As the Lord liveth, and thy soul liveth,” there is but a step between thee and this. Thou knowest not, when thou liest down, but thou mayest be in it before the morning : thou knowest not, when thou risest, but thou mayest drop in before night. Darest thou make light of this ? Wilt thou go on in such a dreadful condition, as if nothing ailed thee ? If thou puttest it off, and sayest, “ This doth not belong to thee,” look again over the foregoing chapter, and tell me the truth : are none of those marks found upon thee ? Do not blind thine eyes ; do not deceive thyself ; see thy misery while thou mayest prevent it : think what it is to be a vile outcast, a vessel of wrath, fitted for destruction.

Divine wrath is a fierce, devouring, everlasting, unquenchable fire, and this must be thy portion, unless thou consider thy ways, and speedily turn to the Lord by a sound conversion. Whose heart would not have melted to have heard Spira’s outcries ? To have seen Chaloner, that monument of justice, worn to skin and bone, blaspheming the God of heaven, cursing himself, and continually crying out “ O torture, torture, torture ! O torture, torture,” as if the flames of wrath had already taken hold on him ? To have heard Rogers crying out, “ I have a little pleasure, but now I must have hell for evermore :” wishing but for this mitigation, that God would but let him lie burning for ever behind the back of that fire, on the earth, and bringing in his sad conclusion still, at the end of whatever was spoken to him to afford him some hope, “ I must to hell, I must to the furnace of hell, for millions and millions of ages !” O ! if the fears and forethoughts of the wrath to come be so terrible, so intolerable, what is the feeling of it !

Sinner, it is but in vain to flatter you : this would be but

to delude you into the unquenchable fire. Know ye, from the living God, that here you must lie ; with these burnings you must dwell till immortality die, and immutability change ; till eternity run out and omnipotence is no longer able to torment, except you be in good earnest renewed throughout by sanctifying grace.

VII. *The law discharges all its threats and curses at thee.* O how dreadfully doth it thunder ! its words are as drawn swords, and as the sharp arrows of the mighty : it demands satisfaction to the utmost, and cries, Justice ! Justice ! It speaks blood, and war, and wounds, and death, against thee. O man, away to thy strong-hold, away from thy sins ; haste to the sanctuary, the city of refuge, even the Lord Jesus Christ—hide thee in him, or else thou art lost, without any hope of recovery.

VIII. *The gospel itself bindeth the sentence of eternal damnation upon thee.* If thou continuest in thine impenitent and unconverted state, know that the gospel denounceth a much sorer condemnation than ever would have been for the transgression only of the first covenant. Is it not a dreadful case to have the gospel itself fill its mouth with threats ? “ To have the Lord to roar from mount Sion against thee ?” “ Hear the terror of the Lord : he that believeth not shall be damned. Except ye repent, ye shall all perish.” “ This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light.” “ He that believeth not, the wrath of God abideth on him.” “ If the word spoken by angels was steadfast ; and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation.” “ He that despised Moses’ law, died without mercy : of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy, that hath trampled under foot the Son of God !”

*Application.* And is this true indeed ? Is this thy misery ? Yea, it is as true as God is. Better open thine eyes and see

it now, while thou mayest remedy it, than blind and harden thyself, till, to thy eternal sorrow, thou shalt feel what thou wouldst not believe : and, if it be true, what dost thou mean, to loiter and linger in such a case as this ?

Alas, for thee, poor man ! how effectually hath sin undone thee, and deprived and despoiled thee even of thy reason to look after thine own everlasting good ! What stupidity and senselessness have surprised thee ! O ! let me awake this sleeper ! Art thou a reasonable soul, and yet so far brutalized as to forget thyself immortal, and to think thyself to be as the beasts that perish ? Having reason to understand the eternity of the future state, dost thou yet make light of being everlastingly miserable, which is to be so much below the brute, as it is worse to act against reason than to act without it ? O unhappy soul, that wast the glory of man, the fellow of angels, and the image of God ! that wast God's representative in the world, and had the supremacy amongst the creatures, and the dominion over thy Maker's works ! art thou now become a slave to sense, or art heaping together a little refined earth, so unsuitable to thy spiritual immortal nature ? O, why dost thou not bethink thee where thou shalt be for ever ? Death is at hand : " the Judge is even at the door." Yet a little while, and " time shall be no longer." And wilt thou run the hazard of continuing in such a state, in which, if thou be overtaken, thou art irrecoverably miserable ?

Come then, arise, and attend thy nearest concerns ! Tell me whither art thou going ? What ! wilt thou live in such a course, wherein every act is a step to perdition ; and dost thou not know but the next night thou mayest make thy bed in hell ? O ! if thou hadst a spark of reason, consider, and turn and hearken to thy very friend, who would therefore show thee thy present misery, that thou mightest in time make thine escape, and be eternally happy.

Hear what the Lord saith : " Fear ye not me, saith the Lord ? will ye not tremble at my presence ?" O sinners, do

you make light of " the wrath to come ?" I am sure there is a time coming when you will not make light of it. Why, the very " devils do believe and tremble. " \* What ! you more hardened than they ? Will you run upon the edge of the rock ? Will you play at the hole of the asp ? Will you put your hand upon the cockatrice's den ? Will you trifle with devouring wrath, as if you were at a point of indifference whether you did escape or endure it ? O madness of folly ! Solomon's madman, that casteth fire-brands, and arrows, and death, and saith, " Am I not in jest ?" There is nothing so distracted as the wilful sinner, that goeth on in his unconverted state without sense, as if nothing ailed him. The man that runs into the cannon's mouth, or lets out his life in a frolic, is sensible, sober, and serious to him that goeth on still in his trespasses, for he " stretcheth out his hand against God, and strengthens himself against the Almighty. He runneth upon the thick bosses of his buckler." Is it wisdom to trifle with the second death, or to venture into " the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone ?" What shall I say ? I can find out no expression, no comparison, whereby to set forth the dreadful distraction of that soul that shall go on in sin.

Awake, awake, O sinner ! arise and take thy flight. There is but one door that thou mayest flee by, and that is the strait door of conversion and the new birth. Unless thou turn unfeignedly from all thy sins, and come to Jesus Christ, and take him for the Lord thy righteousness, and walk in him in holiness and newness of life, as the Lord liveth, it is not more certain that thou art now out of hell, than that thou shalt without fail be in it but a few days or nights hence. O, set thy heart to think of thy case. Is not thy everlasting misery or welfare that which doth deserve a little consideration ? Look again over the miseries of the unconverted. If the Lord hath not spoken by me, regard me not ; but if it be the very word of God that all this misery lies upon thee, what a case art thou in ? Is it for one

that hath his senses, to live in such a condition, and not to make all possible expedition for preventing his utter ruin ? O man, “who hath bewitched thee,” that in the matters of this present life thou shalt be wise enough to forecast thy business, foresee thy danger, and prevent thy mischief, but in matters of everlasting consequence shall be slight and careless, as if they little concerned thee ? Why, is it nothing to thee to have all the attributes of God engaged against thee ? Canst thou do well without his favour ? Canst thou escape his hands, or endure his vengeance ? Dost thou hear the creation groaning under thee, and hell groaning for thee, and yet think thy case “good enough ?” Wilt thou make light of all the terrors of the law, of all its curses and thunders ? Dost thou laugh at hell and destruction, or canst thou drink the envenomed cup of the Almighty’s fury, as if it were but a common potion ?”

“Gird up now thy loins like a man, for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me.” Art thou such a Leviathan, as that the scales of thy pride should keep thee from thy Maker’s coming at thee ? Wilt thou esteem his arrows as straw, and the instruments of death as rotten wood ? Art thou chief of all the children of pride, even that thou shouldst count his darts as stubble, and laugh at the shaking of his spear ? Art thou like the horse that paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength, who goeth out to meet the armed men ? Dost thou mock at fear, and art not affrighted, neither turnest back from God’s sword when his quiver rattleth against thee, the glittering spear, and the shield ? Well, if the threats and calls of the word will not fright thee nor awaken thee, I am sure death and judgment will. O, what wilt thou do when the Lord cometh forth against thee, and in his fury falleth upon thee, and thou shalt feel what thou readest ? If, when Daniel’s enemies were cast into the den of lions, both they and their wives and their children, the lions had the mastery of them, and broke all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the

bottom of the den, what shall be done with thee when thou fallest into the hands of the living God ?

O ! do not then contend with God. “Repent and be converted,” so none of this shall come upon thee. “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found ; call on him while he is near : let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts : let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”

## CHAPTER VI.

### *Directions for Conversion.*

BEFORE thou readest these directions, I advise thee, yea, I charge thee, before God and his holy angels, that you resolve to follow them, as far as conscience shall be convinced of their agreeableness to God’s word and thy state, and call in his assistance and blessing that they may succeed. And, as I have “sought the Lord,” and consulted his oracles what advice to give thee, so must thou entertain them with that awe, reverence, and purpose of obedience, that the word of the living God doth require.

Now, then, attend : “Set thine heart unto all that I shall testify unto thee this day ; for it is not a vain thing, it is your life.” This is the end of all that has been spoken hitherto, to bring you to set upon turning, and make use of God’s means for your conversion. I would not trouble you, nor “torment you before your time,” with the sore thoughts of your eternal misery, but in order to your making your escape. Were you shut up under your present misery without remedy, as it were but mercy, as one speaks, to let you alone, that you might take in that little poor comfort that you are capable of in this world ; but you may yet be

happy, if you do not wilfully refuse the means of your recovery. Behold I hold open the door to you ; arise, take your flight. I set the way of life before you ; walk in it, and “ you shall live and not die.” It grieves me to think you should be your own murderers, and throw yourselves headlong, when God and man cry out to you, as Peter in another case to his Master, “ spare thyself.”

A noble virgin, that attended the court of Spain, was wickedly ravished by the king ; and hereupon, exciting the duke, her father, to revenge, he called in the Moors to his help : who, when they had executed his design, miserably wasted and spoiled the country ; which this virgin laying so extremely to heart, she shut herself up in a tower belonging to her father’s house, and desired her father and mother might be called forth ; and, bewailing to them their wretchedness, that she should occasion so much misery and desolation to the country for satisfying her revenge, she told them she had resolved to be revenged upon herself. Her father and mother besought her to pity herself and them ; but nothing prevailing, she took her leave of them, and threw herself off the battlements, and so perished before their faces.

Just thus is the wilful destruction of ungodly men. The God that made them, beseeching them, crieth out to them, as Paul to the distracted jailor, when about to murder himself, “ do thyself no harm.” The ministers of Christ forewarn them, and follow them, and fain would have them back ; but alas ! no expostulations or obtestations will prevail, but men will hurl themselves into perdition, while pity itself looketh on.

What shall I say ? Would it not grieve a person of any humanity, if, in the time of a raging plague, he should have a receipt, as one said well, that would infallibly cure all the country, and recover the most hopeless patients, and yet his friends and neighbours should die by hundreds about him, because they would not use it ? Men and brethren, though

you carry the certain symptoms of death in your faces, yet I have a receipt that will cure you all, and will cure infallibly. Follow but these directions, and, if you do not then win heaven, I will be content to lose it.

Hear, then, O sinner ! and, as ever thou wouldst be converted and saved, embrace this following counsel.

Direct. I. *Set it down with thyself, as an undoubted truth, that it is impossible for thee ever to get to heaven in this thy unconverted state.* Can any other but Christ save thee ? and he tells thee he will never do it, except thou be regenerated and converted. Doth he not keep the keys of heaven ? and canst thou go in without his leave ? as thou must, if ever thou come thither in thy natural condition, without a sound and thorough renovation.

Direct. II. *Labour to get a thorough sight, and lively sense and feeling of thy sins.* Till men are weary and heavy laden, and pricked at the heart and quite sick of sin, they shall not come unto Christ, in his way, for ease and cure, nor to purpose inquire, “ What shall we do ?” They must set themselves down for dead men before they will come unto Christ, that they may have life. Labour therefore to set all thy sins in order before thee ; never be afraid to look upon them, but let thy Spirit make diligent search. Inquire into thine heart, and into thy life ; enter into a thorough examination of thyself and all thy ways, that thou mayest make a full discovery ; and call in the help of God’s Spirit in the sense of thine own inability hereunto, for it is his proper work to convince of sin. Spread all before the face of thy conscience. Leave not striving with God and thine own soul, till it cry out, under the sense of thy sins, as the enlightened jailor, “ what must I do to be saved ?” To this purpose,

“ Meditate on the numerousness of thy sins.” David’s heart failed when he thought of this, and considered that he had more sins than hairs. This made him cry out for the

multitude of God's tender mercies. Look backward : where was ever the place, what was ever the time, in which thou didst not sin ? Look inward : what part or power canst thou find in soul or body, but it is poisoned with sin ? Look over the sins of thy nature, the sins of thy life. Call to mind thy omissions, commissions ; the sins of thy thoughts, words, and actions ; the sins of thy youth and the sins of thy years, &c. Be not like a desperate bankrupt, that is afraid to look over his books. Read the records of conscience carefully. These books must be opened sooner or later.

“ Meditate on the aggravations of thy sins, as they are the grand enemies of the God of thy life, and of the life of thy soul : in a word, they are the public enemies of all mankind.” How do David, Ezra, Daniel, and the good Levite, aggravate their sins, from the consideration of their injuriousness to God, their opposition to his good and righteous laws, the mercies, the warnings, against which they were committed. O the work that sin hath made in the world ! This is the enemy that hath brought in death, and hath robbed and enslaved man, that hath prepared hell. This is the enemy that hath sown dissension between man and the creatures, betwixt man and man, yea, between man and himself, setting the sensitive part against the rational, the will against the judgment, affection against conscience ; yea, worst of all, between God and man, making the lapsed sinner both hateful to God and the hater of God. O man ! how canst thou make so light of sin ? This is the traitor that crucified the Son of God, that sold him, that mocked him, that scourged him, that spit in his face, that nailed his hands, that pierced his side, that pressed his soul, that mangled his body, that never left till he had bound him, condemned him, nailed him, crucified him, and put him to an open shame. This is that deadly poison, so powerful of operation, as that one drop of it, shed on the root of mankind, hath corrupted, spoiled, poisoned, and undone, his whole race at once. This is the bloody

executioner, that hath killed the prophets, burned the martyrs, murdered all the apostles, all the patriarchs, all the kings and potentates ; that has destroyed cities, swallowed empires, and devoured whole nations. Whatever was the weapon it was done by, sin was that which did the execution. Dost thou yet think it but a small thing ? Study the nature of sin till thy heart incline to fear and loathe it ; and meditate on the aggravations of thy particular sins, how thou hast sinned against all God's warnings, against thy own prayers, against mercies, against correction, against clearest light, against freest love, against thine own resolutions, against promises, vows, covenants, and better obedience, &c. Charge thy heart home with these things, till it blush for shame, and be brought out of all good opinion of itself.

“ Meditate on the desert of sin.” It crieth to heaven ; it calls for vengeance. Its due wages are death and damnation ; it brings the curse of God upon the soul and body. The least sinful word or thought lays thee under the infinite wrath of God Almighty. O what a load of wrath, what a weight of curses, what a treasure of vengeance, have all thy numerous sins then deserved ! O judge thyself, that the Lord may not judge thee.

“ Meditate on the deformity and defilement of sin.” It is as the very image and likeness of the devil drawn upon the soul. There is no plague or leprosy so noisome, as sin, whereby thou art rendered more displeasing to the pure and holy nature of the glorious God, than the vilest object, composed of whatever is hateful to all thy senses, can be to thee. Thou art contrary to the pure and perfect holiness of the divine nature, till thou art purified by the blood of Jesus, and the power of renewing grace.

Above all other sins, fix the eye of consideration on these two :

1. The sin of thy nature. It is to little purpose to lop the branches, while the root of original corruption remains untouched. In vain do men lave out the streams, when the



fountain is running that fills up all again. Let the axe of thy repentance, with David's, go to the root of sin. Study how deep, how close, how permanent, is thy natural pollution, how universal it is, till thou dost cry out, with Paul's feeling, upon thy body as dead. The heart is never soundly broken, till thoroughly convinced of the heinousness of original sin. Here fix thy thoughts ; this is that which makes thee backward to all good, prone to all evil. That sheds blindness, pride, prejudice, unbelief, into thy mind ; enmity, inconstancy, obstinacy, into thy will : inordinate heats and colds into thy affections ; insensibleness, benumbedness, unfaithfulness into thy conscience ; slipperiness into thy memory ; and in a word, hath put every wheel of the soul out of order, and made it, of a habitation of holiness, to become a very hell of iniquity. This is what hath defiled, corrupted, perverted all thy members, and turned them into weapons of unrighteousness and servants of sin ; that hath filled the head with carnal and corrupt designs ; the hand with sinful practices ; the eyes with wandering and wantonness, the tongue with deadly poison ; that hath opened the ear to tales, flattery, and filthy communication, and shut them against the instructions of life ; and hath rendered thy heart a very mint and forge for sin, so that it sendeth forth its wickedness without ceasing, even as naturally, freely and unweariedly, as a fountain doth pour forth its waters, or the raging sea doth cast forth mire and dirt. And wilt thou yet be in love with thyself, and tell us any longer of thy good heart ? O never leave meditating on the desperate contagion of original corruption, till, with Ephraim, thou bemoan thyself, and with the deepest shame and sorrow smite on thy breast, as the publican ; and, with Job, abhor thyself, and repent in dust and ashes.

2. The particular evil that thou art most addicted to. Find out all its aggravations, set home upon thy heart all God's threats against it : repentance drives before it the whole herd, but especially sticks the arrow in the beloved

sin, and singles this out, above the rest, to run it down. O ! labour to make this sin odious to thy soul, and double thy guard and resolutions against it, because it doth most dishonour God and endanger thee.

Direct. III. *Strive to affect thy heart with a deep sense of thy present misery.* Read over the foregoing chapter again and again, and get it out of the book into thy heart. Remember, when thou liest down, that, for aught thou knowest, thou mayest awake in flames, and when thou risest up, that by the next night thou mayest make thy bed in hell. Is it a just matter to live in such a fearful case, to stand tottering upon the brink of the bottomless pit, and to live at the mercy of every disease ? Suppose thou sawest a condemned wretch hanging over Nebuchadnezzar's burning fiery furnace by nothing but a slender thread, which were ready to break every moment, would not thy heart tremble for such a one ? Why, thou art the man ; this is thy very case, O man, that readest this, if thou yet be unconverted ! What if the thread of thy life should break, (why thou knowest not but it may be the next night, yea, the next moment) where wouldst thou be then ? Whither wouldst thou drop ? Verily, upon the breaking of this thread, thou fallest into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, if thou die in thy present case. And doth not thy soul tremble as thou readest ? Do not thy tears bedew the paper, and thy heart throb, in thy bosom ? Dost thou not yet begin to smite on thy breast, and bethink thyself what need thou hast of a change ? O ! what is thy heart made of ? Hast thou not only lost all regard to God, but art without any love and pity to thyself ?

O study thy misery, till thy heart cry out for Christ as earnestly as ever a drowning man did for a boat, or the wounded for a surgeon. Men must come to see the danger and feel the smart of their deadly sores and sickness, or else Christ will be to them a physician of no value. Then the manslayer hastens to the city of refuge when pursued by the

avenger of blood. Men must be even forced out of themselves, or else they will not come to Christ. It was distress and extremity that made the prodigal think of returning. While Laodicea thinks herself rich, increased in goods, in need of nothing, there is little hope. She must be deeply convinced of her wretchedness, blindness, poverty, nakedness, before she will come to Christ for his gold, raiment, eye-salve. Therefore hold the eyes of conscience open, amplify thy misery as much as possible ; do not flee the sight of it, for fear it should fill thee with terror. The sense of thy misery is but as it were the suppuration of the wound, which is necessary to the cure. Better fear the torments that abide thee now, than feel them hereafter.

Direct. IV. *Settle it upon thy heart that thou art under everlasting inability ever to recover thyself.* Never think thy praying, reading, hearing, confessing, amending, will do the cure ; these must be attended to, but thou art undone if thou retest in them. Thou art a lost man, if thou hopest to escape by any other means but Jesus Christ. Thou must unlearn thyself, and renounce thine own wisdom, thine own righteousness, thine own strength, and throw thyself wholly upon Christ, as a man that swims casts himself upon the water, or else thou canst not escape. While men trust in themselves, and establish their own righteousness, and have confidence in the flesh, they will not come savingly to Christ. Thou must know thy gain to be but loss and dung, thy strength but weakness, thy righteousness rags, before there will be an effectual closure between Christ and thee. Can the lifeless body shake off its grave-clothes, and loose the bands of death ? then mayest thou recover thyself, who art dead in trespasses and sins, and under an impossibility of serving thy Maker acceptably in this condition. Therefore, when thou goest to pray or meditate, or to do any of the duties to which thou art here directed, go out of thyself ; call in the help of the Spirit, as despairing to do any thing pleasing to God in thine own strength : yet neglect not thy

duty, but lie at the pool, and wait in the way of the Spirit. While the eunuch was reading, then the Holy Ghost did send Philip to him.

When the disciples were praying, when Cornelius and his friends were hearing, then the Holy Ghost fell upon them and filled them all. Strive to give up thyself to Christ ; strive to pray ; strive to meditate ; strive a hundred and a hundred times ; try to do it as well as thou canst ; and while thou art endeavouring in the way of thy duty, the Spirit of the Lord will come upon thee, and help thee to do what of thyself thou art utterly unable to perform.

Direct. V. *Forthwith renounce all thy sins.* If thou yield thyself to the practice of any sin, thou art undone. In vain dost thou hope for life by Christ, except thou depart from iniquity. Forsake thy sins, or else thou canst not find mercy. Thou canst not be married to Christ, except divorced from sin. Give up the traitor, or you can have no peace in heaven. Thou must part with thy sins or with thy soul : spare but one sin, and God will not spare thee. Never make excuses ; thy sins must die, or thou must die for them. If thou allow of one sin, though but a little, a secret one, though thou mayest plead necessity, and have a hundred shifts and excuses for it, the life of thy soul must go for the life of that sin. And will it not be dearly bought ?

O sinner ! hear and consider : if thou wilt part with thy sins, God will give thee his Christ. Is not this a fair exchange ? I testify unto thee, this day, that, if thou perish, it is not because there was never a Saviour provided, nor life tendered, but because thou preferredst, with the Jew, the murderer before thy Saviour, sin before Christ, “ and lovedst darkness rather than light.” Search thy heart, therefore, with candles, as the Jews did their houses for leaven before the passover. Labour to find out thy sins ; enter into thy closet, and consider, what evil have I lived in ? What duty have I neglected towards God ? What sin have I lived in against my brother ? And now strike the darts

through the heart of thy sin, as Joab did through Absalom's. Never stand looking upon thy sins, nor rolling the morsel under thy tongue, but reject it with fear and detestation. Alas ! what will thy sins do for thee, that thou shouldst stick at parting with them ? They will flatter thee, but they will undo thee, and poison thee while they please thee, and arm the justice and wrath of the infinite God against thee. Behold the gibbet that they have prepared for thee ! O serve them like Haman, and do upon them the execution they would else have done upon thee. Away with them, crucify them, and let Christ only be Lord over thee.

Direct. VI. *Make a solemn choice of God for thy portion and blessedness.* With all possible devotion and veneration, avouch the Lord for thy God : set the world, with all its glory, and paint, and gallantry, with all its pleasures and promotions, on the one hand ; and set God, with all his infinite excellencies and perfections on the other ; and see that thou dost deliberately make thy choice. Take up thy rest in God. Sit thee down under his shadow. Let his promises and perfections turn the scale against all the world. Settle it upon thy heart, that the Lord is an all-sufficient portion, that thou canst not be miserable while thou hast God to live upon. Take him for thy shield and exceeding great reward. God alone is more than all the world ; content thyself with him. Let others carry the preferments and glory of the world ; place thou thy happiness in his favour, and in the light of his countenance.

Poor sinner ! thou art fallen off from God, and hast engaged his power and wrath against thee ; yet know that, of his abundant grace, he doth offer to be thy God again in Christ. What sayest thou ? wilt thou have the Lord for thy God ? Why, take this counsel, and thou shalt have him ; come to him by his Christ, renounce the idols of thy own pleasures, gain, reputation, let these be pulled out of their throne, and set God's interest uppermost in thy heart. Take him as God, to be chief in thy affections, estimations,

intentions ; for he will not endure to have any set above him. In a word, thou must take him in all his “ personal relations,” and in all his “ essential perfections.”

First, *In all his personal relations.* God the Father must be taken for thy father. O come to him with the prodigal ! “ Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am not worthy to be called thy son ; but since, of thy wonderful mercy, thou art pleased to take me to be a child, I solemnly take thee for my father, commend myself to thy care, and trust to thy providence, and cast my burden on thee. I depend on thy provision and submit to thy corrections, and trust under the shadow of thy wings, and hide in thy chambers, and fly to thy name. I renounce all confidence in myself ; I repose my confidence in thee ; I deposite my concerns with thee ; I will be for thee, and not for another.” Again, God the Son must be taken for thy Saviour, for thy Redeemer, and Righteousness. He must be accepted, as the only way to the Father, and the only means of life. O then put off the raiment of thy captivity, on with the wedding-garment, and go and marry thyself to Christ. “ Lord, I am thine, and all I have, my body, soul, and estate. I send a bill of divorce to my other lovers ; I give my heart to thee ; I will be thine undividedly, thine everlastingly. I will set thy name on all I have, and use it only as thy goods, during thy leave, resigning all to thee : I will have no king but thee, to reign over me. Other lords have had dominion over me ; but now I will make mention of thy name only, and do now take an oath of fealty to thee, promising to serve thee and fear thee above all competitors. I disavow mine own righteousness, and despair of ever being pardoned and saved for my own duties or graces, and lean solely on thy all sufficient sacrifice and intercession for pardon, and life, and acceptance before God. I take thee for my only guide and instructor, resolving to be directed by thee, and to wait for thy counsel.” Lastly, God the Spirit must be taken for thy sanctifier, for thy advocate, thy

counsellor, thy comforter, the teacher of thy ignorance, the pledge and earnest of thy inheritance. "Awake, thou north wind, and come, thou south, and blow upon my garden." "Come, thou Spirit of the Most High ! here do thou rest for ever ; dwell here ; and rest here ; lo, I give up the possession to thee, full possession ; I send thee the keys of my heart, that all may be for thy use, that thou mayest put thy goods, thy grace, into every room : I give up the use of all to thee, that every faculty, and every member, may be thy instrument to work righteousness, and do the will of my Father who is in heaven."

Secondly, *In all his essential perfections.* Consider how the Lord hath revealed himself to you in his word. Will you take him as such a God ? O sinner, here is the most blessed news that ever came to the sons of men : " the Lord will be thy God, if thou wilt but close with him in his excellencies." Wilt thou have the merciful, the gracious, the sin-pardoning God to be thy God ? " O yes," saith the sinner, " I am undone else." But the Father tells thee, I am the holy and sin-hating God ; if thou wilt be owned as one of my people, thou must be holy, holy in heart, holy in life ; thou must put away all thy iniquities, be they ever so near, ever so natural, ever so necessary to the maintaining thy worldly interest. Unless thou wilt be at defiance with sin, I cannot be thy God. " Cast out the leaven ; put away the evil of thy doings ; cease to do evil ; learn to do well ;" else I can have nothing to do with thee. Bring forth mine enemies, or there is no peace to be had with me. What doth thine heart answer ? " Lord, I desire to have thee as such a God : I desire to be holy as thou art holy, and to be made partaker of thy holiness. I love thee, not only for thy goodness and mercy, but for thy holiness and purity. I take thy holiness for my happiness. O be to me a fountain of holiness ! set on me the stamp and impress of thy holiness ; I will thankfully part with all my sins at thy command. My wilful sins I do forthwith forsake ; and all for mine

infirmities, that I cannot get rid of though I would : I will strive against them in the use of the means : I detest them, and will pray against them, and never let them have quiet rest in my soul." Beloved, whoever of you will thus accept of the Lord, for his God, shall have him.

Again, he tells you, " I am the all-sufficient God." Will you lay all at my feet, and give it up to my disposal, and take me for your only portion ? Will you own and honour my all-sufficiency ? Will you take me as your happiness and treasure, your hope and bliss ? I am a sun and a shield, all in one ; will you have me for your all ? Now, what dost thou say to this ? Art thou loath to change thy earthly happiness for a portion in God ? and though thou wouldst be glad to have God and the world too, yet canst thou not think of having him, and nothing but him, but hadst rather take up with the earth below, if God would but let thee keep it as long as thou wouldst ? This is a fearful sin. But now, if thou art willing to sell all for the pearl of great price, if thine heart answer, " Lord, I desire no other portion but thee ; take the corn, and the wine, and the oil, whoso will, so I may have the light of thy countenance : I pitch upon thee for my happiness ; I gladly venture myself on thee, and trust myself with thee ; I set my hopes in thee ; I take up my rest with thee. Let me hear thee say, I am thy God, thy salvation, and I have enough, all I wish for ; I will make no terms with thee but for thyself. Let me but have thee sure ; let me be able to make my claim, and see my title to thyself ; and, for other things, I leave them to thee. Give me more or less, any thing, or nothing, I will be satisfied in my God." Take him thus, and he is thy own.

Again, he tells you, " I am the sovereign Lord : if you will have me for your God, you must give me the supremacy. I will not be an underling ; you must not make me a second to sin or any worldly interest. If you will be my people, I must have the rule over you ; you must not live at your own pleasure. Will you come under my yoke ? Will

you bow to my government ? Will you submit to my discipline, to my word, to my rod ?” Sinner, what sayest thou to this ? “ Lord, I had rather be at thy command, than live at my own list ; I had rather have thy will to be done than mine : I approve of and consent to thy laws, and account it my privilege to lie under them. And, though the flesh rebel, and often break its bounds, I have resolved to take no other Lord but thee. I willingly take the oath of thy supremacy, and acknowledge thee for my liege Sovereign, and resolve all my days to pay the tribute of worship, obedience, love, and service to thee ; and to live to thee to the end of my life.” This is a right acceptance of God.

To be short, he tells you, I am the true and faithful God. If you will have me for your God, you must be content to trust me. Will you venture yourselves upon my word, and depend on my faithfulness, and take my bond for your security ? Will you be content to follow me in poverty, and reproach, and affliction, here, and to tarry till the next world, for your preferment ? Will you be content to labour and suffer, and to tarry for your returns till the resurrections of the just ? The womb of my promise will not presently bring forth ; will you have the patience to wait ? Now, beloved, what say you to this ? Will you have this God for your God ? Will you be content to live by faith, and trust him for an unseen happiness, an unseen heaven, an unseen glory ? Do your hearts answer, “ Lord, we will venture ourselves upon thee ; we commit ourselves to thee ; we know whom we have trusted ; we are willing to take thy word ; we will prefer thy promises before our own possessions, and the hopes of heaven before all the enjoyments of the earth ; we will wait thy leisure, what thou wilt here, so that we may have but thy faithful promise for heaven hereafter.” If you can, in truth, and upon deliberation, thus accept of God, he will be yours. Thus there must be, in a right conversion to God, a closing with

him suitable to his excellencies. But, when men close with his mercy, but yet love sin, hating holiness and purity ; or will take him for their benefactor, but not for their sovereign, or for their patron, and not for their portion ; this is no thorough and sound conversion.

Direct. VII. *Accept of the Lord Jesus in all his offices, with all his inconveniences, as thine.* Upon these terms Christ may be had. Sinner, thou hast undone thyself, and art plunged into the most deplorable misery, out of which thou art never able to escape ; but Jesus Christ is able and ready to help thee, and he freely tenders himself to thee. Be thy sins ever so many, ever so great, or of ever so long continuance, yet you shall be most certainly pardoned and saved, if thou dost not wretchedly neglect the offer that in the name of God is here made to thee. The Lord Jesus calleth thee, to look to him and be saved, to “ come unto him, and he will in no wise cast thee out.” Yea, he is a suitor to thee, and beseecheth thee to be reconciled. He crieth in the streets ; he knocketh at thy door ; he wooeth thee to accept of him, and live with him ; if thou diest, it is because thou wouldst not come to him for life.

Now accept of an offered Christ, and thou art right for ever ; now give up thy consent to him, and the match is made ; all the world cannot hinder it. Do not stand off because of thy unworthiness. I tell thee nothing in the world can undo thee but thy unwillingness. Speak ; art thou desirous of the match ? Wilt thou have Christ in all his relations, to be thine ; thy king, thy priest, thy prophet ? Wilt thou have him with all his inconveniences ? Wilt thou lay all at his feet ? Wilt thou be content to run all hazards with him ? Wilt thou take thy lot with him, fall where it will ? Wilt thou “ deny thyself, take up thy cross, and follow him ?” Art thou deliberately, understandingly, freely, determined to cleave to him, in all times and conditions ? If so, my soul for thine, thou shalt never perish, but art passed from death to life. Here lies the main point of thy

salvation, that thou be found in thy covenant-closure with Jesus Christ ; and, therefore, if thou love thyself, see that thou be faithful to God and thy soul here.

Direct. VIII. *Resign up all thy powers and faculties, and thy whole interest to be his.* “They gave their own selves unto the Lord.” “Present your bodies a living sacrifice.” The Lord seeks not yours, but you ; resign, therefore, thy body, with all its members, to him ; and thy soul, with all its powers, that he may be glorified in thy body, and in thy spirit, which are his. In a right closure with Christ, all thy faculties give up to him. Thy judgment describes, “Lord, thou art worthy of all acception, chief of ten thousand. Happy is the man that finds thee. All the things that are to be desired are not to be compared with thee. The understanding lays aside its corrupt reasonings and cavils, and its prejudices against Christ and his ways. It is now past questioning, and carries it for Christ against all the world. It concludes it is “good to be here,” and sees such a treasure in this field, such a value in this pearl, as is worth all. “O ! here is the richest prize that ever man was offered, here is the most sovereign remedy that ever mercy prepared ; he is worthy of my esteem, worthy of my choice, worthy of my love, worthy to be embraced, adored, admired, for evermore. I approve of his articles : his terms are righteous and reasonable, full of equity and mercy.” Again, the will resigns : it stands no longer wavering, nor wishing, but is peremptorily determined : “Lord, thy love hath overcome me, thou hast won me, and thou shalt have me : Come in, Lord ; to thee I freely open, I consent to be saved in thine own way. Thou shalt have any thing ; nay, have all, let me have but thee.” The memory gives up to Christ. “Lord, here is a store-house for thee ; lay in the treasure ; let me be a repository of thy truth, thy promises, thy providences.” The conscience comes in : “Lord, I will ever side with thee ; I will be thy faithful register ; I will warn when the sinner is tempted, and smite when thou art offended ; I will

witness for thee, and judge for thee, and guide into thy ways, and will never let sin have quiet in this soul.” The affections also come into Christ : O ! saith love, “I am sick of thee. O ! saith desire, here is the satisfaction I sought for ; here is the desire of nations ; here is bread for me, and balm for me ; all that I want.” Fear bows the knee with awe and veneration. “Welcome, Lord ; to thee will I pay my homage ; thy word and rod shall command my motions ; thee will I reverence and adore ; before thee will I fall down and worship.” Grief likewise puts in : “Lord, thy displeasure, and thy dishonour, thy people’s calamities, and my own iniquities, shall be what shall set me a-weeping. I will mourn when thou art offended ; I will weep when thy cause is wounded.” Anger likewise comes in for Christ : “Lord, nothing so enrages me as my folly against thee, that I should be so besotted and bewitched as to hearken to the flatteries of sin, and temptations of Satan against thee.” Hatred too will side with Christ : “I protest mortal enmity with thine enemies, that I never will be a friend to thy foes : I vow an immortal quarrel with every sin ; I will give no quarter ; I will make no peace.” Thus let all thy powers give up to Jesus Christ.

Again, thou must give up thy whole interest to him. If there be any thing that thou keepest back from Christ, it will be thine undoing. Unless thou wilt forsake all, in preparation and resolution of thy heart, thou canst not be his disciple. Thou must hate father and mother, yea, and thine own life also, in comparison of him, and as far as it stands in competition with him. In a word, thou must give him thyself, and all that thou hast, without reservation, or else thou canst have no part in him.

Direct. IX. *Make choice of the laws of Christ, as the rule of thy words, thoughts, and actions.* This is the true convert’s choice. But here remember these three rules : 1. You must choose them all : there is no getting to heaven by a partial obedience. Read Psalm cxix. 6, 128, 160. Ezek. xviii. 21.

None may think it enough to take up with the cheap and easy part of religion, and let alone the duties that are costly, and self-denying, and contrary to the interest of the flesh ; you must take all or none. A sincere convert, though he makes most conscience of the greatest sins and weightiest duties ; yet he makes true conscience of little sins and of all duties. For all times—for prosperity and for adversity. A true convert is resolved in his way ; he will stand to his choice, and will not set his back to the wind, and be of the religion of the times. “ I have stuck to thy testimonies ; I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes always, even to the end. Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever. I will have respect to thy statutes continually.” This must be done deliberately and understandingly. The disobedient son said, “ I go, Sir ; but he went not.” How fairly did they promise ? “ All that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee, we will do it.” And it is like they spake as they meant : but, when it came to trial, it was found, that there was not such a heart in them as to do what they had promised. If you would be sincere in closing with the laws and ways of Christ, first “ study the meaning, and latitude, and compass of them.” Remember that they are spiritual ; they reach the very thoughts and inclinations of the heart ; so that, if you will walk by this rule, your very thoughts and inward motions must be under government. Again, they are very strict and self-denying, quite contrary to the grain of your natural inclinations ; you must take the strait gate, the narrow way, and be content to have the flesh curbed from the liberty it desires. In a word, that they are very large, for “ thy commandments are exceeding broad.” 2. Rest not in generals, (for there is much deceit in that), but bring down thine heart to the particular commands of Christ. Those Jews in the Prophet seemed as well resolved as any in the world, and called God to witness that they meant as they said, but they kept in generals ; when God’s command crosses their inclination, they will not obey, Jer. xlii. 1–6.

compared with chap, xliii. 2. Take the Assembly’s Larger Catechism, and see their excellent and most compendious Exposition of the Commandments, and put thy heart to it. Art thou resolved, in the strength of Christ, to set upon the conscientious practice of every duty that thou findest to be there required of thee, and to set against every sin that thou findest here forbidden ? This is the way to be found in God’s statutes, that thou mayest never be ashamed. 3. Observe the special duties that thy heart is most against, and the special sins that it is most inclined to, and see whether it be truly resolved to perform the one, and forego the other. What sayest thou to thy bosom-sin, thy gainful sin ? what sayest thou to costly, hazardous, and flesh displeasing duties ? If thou haltest here, and dost not resolve, by the grace of God, to cross the flesh, thou art unsound.

Direct. X. *Let all this be completed in a solemn covenant between God and thy soul.* For thy better help therein, take these few directions.

*First,* Set apart some time, more than once, to be spent in secret before the Lord :

1. Seeking earnestly his special assistance and gracious acceptance of thee.
2. In considering distinctly all the terms or conditions of the covenant expressed in the form hereafter proposed.
3. In searching thy heart, whether thou art sincerely willing to forsake all thy sins, and to resign up thyself, body and soul, unto God and his service ; to serve him in holiness and righteousness all the days of thy life.

*Secondly,* Compose thy spirit into the most serious frame possible, suitable to a transaction of so high importance.

*Thirdly,* Lay hold on the covenant of God, and rely on his promise of giving grace and strength, whereby thou mayest be enabled to perform thy promise. Trust not to thine own strength, to the strength of thy own resolutions

; but take hold on his strength.

*Fourthly*, Resolve to be faithful : having engaged thy heart, opened thy mouth, and subscribed with thy hand unto the Lord, resolve in his strength never to go back.

*Lastly*, Being thus prepared, on some convenient time set apart for that purpose, set upon the work, and in the most solemn manner possible, as if the Lord were visibly present before thine eyes, fall down on thy knees, and spreading forth thine hands towards heaven, open thine heart to the Lord, in these or the like words.

*The terms of our conversion are either from which, or to which.*

“ O Most dreadful God ! for the passion of thy dear Son, I beseech thee, accept of thy ‘ poor Prodigal,’ now prostrating himself at thy door. I have fallen from thee by mine iniquity, and am by nature a son of death, and a thousand-fold more the child of hell by my wicked practice : but of thine infinite Grace thou hast promised grace to me in Christ, if I will but turn to thee with all my heart : therefore, upon the call of thy gospel, I am now come in ; and throwing down my weapons, submit myself to thy mercy.”

And, because thou requirest, as the condition of my peace with thee, that I should put away mine idols, and be at defiance with all thine enemies, which I acknowledge I have wickedly sided with against thee, I here, from the bottom of my heart, renounce them all, firmly covenanting

*The terms from which we must turn ; sin, Satan, the world, and our own righteousness, which must be thus renounced.*

with thee, not to allow myself in any known sin, but conscientiously use all the means that I hope thou hast prescribed for the death and utter destruction of all my corruptions. And, whereas I must be thus have formerly, inordinately and idolatrously let out my affections

*The ultimate is God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, who must*

upon the world, I do here resign up my heart to thee that madest it, humbly protesting, before thy glorious Majesty, that it is the firm resolution of my heart, and that I unfeignedly desire grace from thee, that when thou shalt call me hereunto, I may practise this my resolution, through thy assistance, to forsake all that is dear to me in this world, rather than to turn from thee to the ways of sin ; and that I will watch against all its temptations, whether of prosperity or adversity, lest they should withdraw my heart from thee ; beseeching thee also to help me against all the temptations of Satan, to whose wicked suggestions I resolve, by thy grace, never to yield myself a servant. And because mine own righteousness is but as filthy rags, I renounce all confidence therein, and acknowledge that I am of myself a hopeless, helpless, undone creature, without righteousness or strength. And forasmuch as thou hast, of thy boundless mercy, offered most graciously to me, a wretched sinner, to be again accepted by God, through Christ, if I would accept of thee, I call heaven and earth to record this day, that I do here solemnly avouch thee for the Lord my God ; and with all possible veneration, bowing the neck of my soul under the feet of thy most sacred Majesty, I do here take thee, the Lord Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for my portion, and chief good ; and so give up myself, body and soul, to thy service, promising and vowing to serve thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of my life.

*The mediate terms are either principal, or less principal. The principal is Christ the Mediator, who must be embraced.*

And since thou hast appointed the Lord Jesus Christ the only means of coming unto thee, I do here, upon the bended knees of my soul, accept of him as the



only, new, and living way, by which sinners may have access to thee : and do hereby solemnly join myself in marriage covenant to him.

O blessed Jesus, I come to thee, poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked ; a most polluted wretch, a guilty and condemned malefactor, unworthy for ever to wash the feet of the servants of my Lord, much more to be solemnly married to the King of Glory ; but since such is thine unparalleled love, I do here, with all my power, accept thee, and do take thee for my head and husband, for all times and conditions, to love, honour, and obey thee, before all others, and this to the death. I embrace thee in all thy offices, I renounce my own worthiness, and do here avow thee to be the Lord, my righteousness ; I renounce my own wisdom, and do here take thee for my only guide ; I renounce my own will, and take thy will for my law.

And, since thou hast told me that I must suffer if I will return, I do here covenant with thee to take my lot as it falls with thee ; and, by thy grace assisting, to run all hazards with thee, verily supposing, that neither life nor death shall part between thee and me.

And because thou hast been pleased to give me thy holy laws, as the rule of my life, and the way in which I should walk to thy kingdom, I do here willingly put my neck in thy yoke ; and subscribing to all thy laws, as holy, just, and good, I solemnly take them as the rule of my thoughts, words, and actions ; promising, that though my flesh contradict and rebel, yet I will endeavour to order and govern my whole life according to thy direction, and will not allow myself in the neglect of any thing that I know to be my duty.

Only (because through the frailty of my flesh) I am subject to so many failings, I am bold humbly to protest, that unallowed miscarriages, contrary to the settled bent and resolution of my heart, shall not make void this covenant ; for so thou hast said.

Now, Almighty God, searcher of hearts, thou knowest that I make this covenant with thee this day, without any known guile or reservation, beseeching thee, that if thou discoverest any flaw or falsehood therein, thou wouldst discover it to me, and help me to do it aright.

And now, glory be to thee, O God the Father, whom I shall be bold, from this day forward, to look upon as my God and Father, that ever thou shouldst find out such a way for the recovery of undone sinners. Glory be to thee, O God the Son, who hast loved me, and washed me from my sins in thine own blood, and art now become my Saviour and Redeemer. Glory be to thee, O God the Holy Ghost, who, by thine Almighty power, hast turned my heart from sin to God.

O dreadful Jehovah ! the Lord God omnipotent Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ! thou art now become my covenant-friend, and I, through thy infinite grace, am become thy covenant-servant. Amen, so be it : And the covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven.

## ADVICE.

*This covenant I advise you to make, not only in heart, but in word ; not only in word, but writing ; and that you would, with all possible reverence, spread the writing before the Lord, as if you would present it to him as your act and deed : and, when you have done this, set your hand to it, keep it as a memorial of the solemn transactions that have passed between God and you, that you may have recourse to it in doubts and temptations.*

Direct. XI. *Take heed of delaying thy conversion, and set upon a speedy and present turning :* “ I made haste and delayed not. ” Remember and tremble at the sad instance of the foolish virgins, that came not till the “ door of mercy was shut ”—and of a convinced Felix, who put off Paul to

another season ; and we never find that he had such another season. O ! come in while it is called to-day, lest thou shouldst be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin—lest the day of grace should be over, and the things which belong to thy peace should be “ hidden from thine eyes.” Now mercy is wooing thee : now Christ is waiting to be gracious to thee, and the Spirit of God is striving with thee : now ministers are calling : now conscience is stirring : now Christ is to be had for the taking. O ! strike in with the offers of grace : O ! now or never ! If thou make light of this offer, God may swear, in his wrath, thou shalt not taste of his supper.

Direct. XII. *Attend conscientiously upon the word, as the means appointed for thy conversion.* Attend, I say, not customarily, but conscientiously ; with this desire, design, hope, and expectation, that thou mayest be converted by it. To every sermon thou hearest come with this thought : “ O ! I hope God will now come in : I hope this day may be the time, this may be the man by whom God will bring me home.” When thou art coming to the ordinances, lift up thy heart thus to God : “ Lord, let this be the Sabbath, let this be the season, whereby I may receive renewing grace : O ! let it be said, that this day such a one was born unto thee.”

*Objection.* Thou wilt say, I have been long a hearer of the word, and yet it hath not been effectual to my conversion.

*Answer.* Yea, but thou hast not attended upon it in this manner as a means of thy conversion, nor with this design, nor praying for and expecting the happy effect from it.

Direct. XIII. *Strike in with the Spirit, when he begins to work upon thy heart.* When he works convictions, O ! do not stifle them, but join in with him, and beg the Lord to carry on conviction to conversion. “ Quench not the Spirit ;” do not outstrive him, do not resist him. Beware of stifling convictions with evil company or worldly business. When

thou findest any troubles of sin, and fears about thy eternal state, beg of God that they may never leave thee till they have wrought off thy heart thoroughly from sin, and wrought it over to Jesus Christ. Say to him, “ Strike home, Lord ; leave not the work in the midst. If thou seest that I am not wounded enough, that I am not troubled enough, wound me yet deeper. Lord : O ! go to the bottom of my corruption, and let out the blood of my sins.” Thus yield up thyself to the workings of the Spirit.

Direct. XIV. *Set upon the constant and diligent use of serious and fervent prayer.* He that neglects prayer is a profane and unsanctified sinner. He that is not constant in prayer is but a hypocrite ; unless omission be contrary to his ordinary course, under the force of some instant temptation. This is one of the first things in which conversion appears, that it sets men on praying. Therefore set to this duty ; let never a day pass over thee, wherein thou hast not, morning and evening, set apart some time for set and solemn prayer in secret. Call thy family also together daily and duly to worship God with thee. Woe be unto thee if thou be found among the families that call not upon God’s name. But cold and lifeless devotions will not reach half way to heaven. Be fervent and importunate ; importunity will carry it ; but without violence, the kingdom of heaven will not be taken. Thou must strive to enter, and wrestle with tears and supplications, as Jacob, if thou meanest to carry the blessing. Thou art undone for ever without grace, and therefore thou must set to it, and resolve to take no denial. That man, who is fixed in this resolution : “ Well, I must have grace, or I will never give over till I have grace ; I will never leave seeking, waiting, and striving with God and my own heart, till he doth renew me by the power of his grace.” This man is in the likeliest way to win grace.

*Objection.* But God heareth not sinners ; their prayer is an abomination.

*Answer.* Distinguish between sinners. 1. There are “resolved sinners ;” their prayers God abhors. 2. “Returning sinners ;” these God will come forth to, and meet with mercy, though yet afar off. Though the prayers of the unsanctified cannot have full acceptance, yet God hath done much at the request of such ; as at Ahab’s humiliation, and Nineveh’s fast. Surely thou mayest go as far as these, though thou hast no grace ; and how dost thou know but thou mayest speed in thy suit, as they did in theirs ? Yea, is he not far more likely to grant to thee than them, since thou askest in the name of Christ, and that not for temporal blessings, as they, but for things much more pleasing to him, namely, for “Christ, grace, pardon, that thou mayest be justified, sanctified, renewed, and fitted to serve him ?” Turn to these soul-encouraging Scriptures, Prov. ii. 1–6. Luke xi. 9, 10, 11, 12, 13. Prov. viii. 34, 35.

Is it not good comfort that he calleth thee ? Doth he set thee on the use of means, and dost thou think he will mock thee ? Doubtless he will not fail thee, if thou be not wanting to thyself. O, pray, and faint not. A person of great quality, having offended the Duke of Buckingham, the king’s great favourite, being admitted into his presence, after long waiting, prostrates himself at his feet, saying, “I have resolved never to rise more till I have obtained your Grace’s favour.” With which carriage he did overcome him. With such a resolution do thou throw thyself at the feet of God ; it is for thy life, and therefore follow him, and give not over ; resolve thou wilt not be put off with common mercies. What though God do not presently open to thee ? Is not grace worth waiting for ? Knock and wait, and no doubt, but, sooner or later, mercy will come.

And this now, that thou hast the very same encouragement to seek and wait, that the saints now in glory once had ; for they were once in thy very case. And have they sped so well, and wilt thou not go to the same door, and wait upon thy God in the same course ?

Direct. XV. *Forsake thy evil company, and forbear the occasion of sin.* Thou wilt never be turned from sin till thou wilt decline and forego the temptations of sin.

I never expect thy conversion from sin, unless thou art brought to some self-denial, as to flee the occasions. If thou wilt be nibbling at the bait, and playing on the brink, and tampering and meddling with the snare, thy soul will surely be taken. Where God doth expose men, in his providence, unavoidably to temptation, and the occasions are such as we cannot remove, we may expect special assistance in the use of his means ; but, when we tempt God by running into danger, he will not engage to support us when we are tempted. And of all temptations, one of the most fatal and pernicious is evil company. O ! what hopeful beginnings have these often stifled ! O ! the souls, the estates, the families, the towns, that these have ruined ! how many poor sinners have been enlightened and convinced, and been just ready to escape the snare of the devil, and have even escaped the snare, and yet wicked company has pulled them back at last, and made them seven-fold more the children of hell ? In a word, I have no hopes of thee, except thou wilt shake off thy evil company. Christ speaketh to thee as to them in another case : “If thou seek me, then let these go their way.” Thy life lies upon it : forsake these, or else thou canst not live. Wilt thou be worse than Balaam’s ass, to run on when thou seest the Lord with a drawn sword in the way ? Let this sentence be written in capitals upon thy conscience, “A COMPANION OF FOOLS SHALL BE DESTROYED.” The Lord hath spoken it, and who shall reverse it ? And wilt thou run upon destruction, when God himself shall forwarn thee ? If God doth ever change thy heart, it will appear in the change of thy company. O ! Fear and flee the gulf, by which so many thousand souls have been swallowed up in perdition. It will be hard for thee indeed to make thy escape. Thy companions will be mocking thee out of thy religion, and

will study to fill thee with prejudices against strictness, as ridiculous and comfortless : they will be flattering thee, and alluring thee, but remember the warnings of the Holy Ghost : “ My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not : if they say, come with us, cast in thy lot among us ; walk thou not in the way with them, refrain thy foot from their path ; avoid it, pass by it, turn from it, and pass away : for the way of the wicked is as darkness, they know not at what they stumble : they lie in wait for their own blood, they lurk privily for their own lives.” My soul is moved within me to see how many of my hearers are like to perish, both they and their houses, by this wretched mischief, even the haunting of such places and company, whereby they are drawn into sin. Once more I admonish you, as Moses did Israel : “ And he spake unto the congregation, saying, depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men.” O ! fly them as you would those that had the plague sores running in their foreheads : and, if thou dost not make thy escape, they will delude thee into perdition, and will prove thine eternal ruin.

Direct. XVI. Lastly, *Set apart a day to humble thy soul in secret, by fasting and prayer ; to work a sense of thy sins and miseries upon thy heart.* Read over the Assembly’s Exposition of the Commandments, and write down the duties omitted, and sins committed, by thee against every commandment, and so make a catalogue of thy sins, and with shame and sorrow spread them before the Lord ; and, if thy heart be truly willing to the terms, join thyself solemnly to the Lord in that covenant set down in the 10th Direction, and the Lord grant thee mercy in his sight.

Thus have I told thee what thou must do to be saved. Wilt thou not obey the voice of the Lord ? Wilt thou not arise and set to thy work ? O man, what answer wilt thou make, what excuse wilt thou have, if thou shouldst perish at last through very wilfulness, when thou hast known the way of life ? I do not fear thy miscarrying, if thine own idleness

do not at last undo thee, in neglecting the use of the means that are so plainly here prescribed. Rouse up, O sluggard ! and ply thy work ; be doing, and the Lord will be with thee.

*A short Soliloquy for an unregenerate Sinner.*

Ah ! wretched man that I am ! what a condition have I brought myself into by sin ! O ! I see my heart hath but deceived me all this while, in flattering me that my condition was good. I see, I see, I am but a lost and undone man, for ever undone, unless the Lord help me out of this condition. My sins ! my sins ! Lord, what an unclean, polluted, wretch am I ! O ! what a depth of sin is in this heart of mine, which I have flattered myself to be a good heart ! Lord, how universally am I corrupted in all my parts, powers, performances ! All the imaginations of the thoughts of my heart are only evil continually. I am under a disability to, averseness from, and enmity against, every thing that is good, and am prone to all that is evil. And O ! the innumerable sinful thoughts, words, and actions, that have originated in my heart ! O the load of guilt that is on my soul ! my head is full, my heart is full, my mind and my members are full of sin.

O my sins ! how do they stare upon me ! how do they witness against me ! woe is me ! every commandment taketh hold on me, far more than ten thousand talents, yea, ten thousand times ten thousand. How endless then is the sum of all my debts ! Woe to me ! for my debts are infinite, and my sins are increased ; they are wrongs to an infinite Majesty ; and, if he that committeth treason against a simple mortal is worthy of death, what have I not deserved, that have so often lifted up my hand against heaven, and have struck at the crown and dignity of the Almighty ?

O my sins, my sins ! behold a troop cometh ! multitudes, multitudes ! there is no numbering their armies. Innumerable evils have compassed me about : mine

iniquities have taken hold upon me ; they have set themselves in array against me ! Lord, how am I surrounded ! how many are they that rise up against me ! they have beset me behind and before ; they have possessed all my powers, and have fortified my unhappy soul, as a garrison, against the God that made me.

And they are as mighty as they are many. The sands are many, but then they are not great. The mountains are great, but then they are not many : but, woe is me ! my sins are as many as the sands, and as mighty as the mountains ; their weight is greater than their number. It were better that the rocks and mountains would fall upon me, than the crushing and insupportable load of my own sins. Lord, I am heavy laden ; let mercy help, or I am gone. Unlade me of this heavy, this sinking, guilt, Lord ! or I am crushed without hope, and must be pressed down to hell. If my grief were thoroughly weighed, and sins laid in the balance together, they would be heavier than the sands of the sea ; therefore my words are swallowed up. O Lord, thou knowest my manifold transgressions and my mighty sins !

Ah, my soul ! alas, my glory ! whither art thou humbled ? once the glory of the creation, and the express image of God, now become corrupt and sinful. O what work hath sin made with thee ! Thou shalt be termed forsaken, and the name that thou shalt be called by is Ichabod, or, “Where is the glory ?” How art thou come down mightily ! My beauty is turned into deformity, and my glory into shame. Lord, what a loathsome leper am I ! and how abhorrent I must needs be to the most holy God, whose eyes cannot behold iniquity !

And what misery have my sins brought upon me ! Lord, what a case am I in ! sold under sin, cast out of God’s favour, cursed from the Lord, cursed in my body, cursed in my soul, cursed in my name, in my estate, in my relations, and all that I have. My sins are unpardoned, and my soul is within a step of death. Alas ! what shall I do ? whither shall

I go ? which way shall I look ? God is frowning on me from above, hell gaping for me beneath, conscience smiting me within, temptations and dangers surrounding me without. O ! whither shall I flee ? what place can hide me from omniscience ? what power can secure me from omnipotence ?

What meanest thou, O my soul, to go on thus ? art thou in league with hell ? hast thou made a covenant with death ? art thou in love with thy misery ? “Is it good for thee to be here ?” Alas ! what shall I do ? shall I go on in my sinful ways ? Why then certain destruction shall be my end. Shall I linger any longer in this wretched state ? No ; if I tarry here I shall die ! What then ? Is there no help, no hope ? None, except I turn. Why, but is there any remedy for such woeful misery ? any mercy after such provoking iniquity ? Yes, as sure as God’s oath is true, I shall have pardon and mercy yet, if presently, and unfeignedly, and unreservedly, I turn by Christ to him.

Why then I thank thee, upon the bended knees of my soul, O most merciful Jehovah ! that thy patience hath waited upon me hitherto ; for, hadst thou taken me away in this state, I had perished for ever. And now I adore thy grace, and accept the offers of thy mercy. I renounce all my sins, and resolve, by thy grace, to set myself against them, and follow thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of my life.

Who am I, Lord, that I should make any claim unto thee, or have any part or portion in thee ? yet, since thou holdest forth the golden sceptre, I am bold to come and touch. To despair would be to disparage thy mercy—and to stand off, when thou biddest me to come, would be at once to undo myself, and rebel against thee, under the pretence of humility. Therefore I bow my soul to thee, and with all possible thankfulness accept thee as mine, and give up myself to thee as thine. Thou shalt be Sovereign over me, “my King and my God.” Thou shalt be in the throne, and

all my powers shall bow to thee ; they shall come and worship before thy feet. Thou shalt be my portion, O Lord, and I will rest in thee.

Thou callest for my heart : O that it were any way fit for thine acceptance ! I am unworthy, O Lord ! everlastingly unworthy to be thine ; but, since thou wilt have it so, I freely give up my heart to thee—take it ; it is thine. O that it were better ! But, Lord, I put it into thy hand, who alone canst mend it. Mould it after thine own heart ; make it, as thou wouldst have it, holy, humble, heavenly, soft, tender, flexible ; and write thy law upon it.

“ Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly !” enter in triumphantly ; take me up to thee for ever. I give up myself to thee ; I come to thee, as the only way to the Father, as the only mediator, the means ordained to bring me to God. I have destroyed myself, but in thee is my help : “ Save, Lord, or else I perish !” Never was the hire more due to the servant, never was penny more due to the labourer, than death and hell (my just wages) are due to me from my sins. But I flee to thy merits ; I trust alone to the value and virtue of thy sacrifice, and prevalence of thy intercession. I submit to thy teaching ; I make choice of thy government. “ Stand open, ye everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in.”

O thou Spirit of the Most High, the comforter and sanctifier of thy chosen ! come in with all thy glorious train, all thy courtly attendants, thy fruits and graces ; let me be thine habitation ; I can give thee but what is thine own already : but here, with the poor widow, I cast my two mites, my soul and my body, into thy treasury, fully resigning them up to thee, to be sanctified by thee, to be servants to thee. They shall be thy patients ; cure thou their malady. They shall be thy agents ; govern thou their motions. Too long have I served the world ; too long have I hearkened to Satan : but now I renounce them all, and will be ruled by thy dictates and directions, and guided by

thy counsel.

O blessed Trinity ! O glorious Unity ! I deliver up myself to thee ; receive me ; write thy name, O Lord, upon me, and upon all that I have, as thy proper goods : set thy mark upon me, upon every member of my body, and on every faculty of my soul. I have chosen thy precepts : thy law will I keep in mine eye, and study to write after. According to this rule, do I resolve, through thy grace, to walk ; after this law, shall my whole man be governed ; and though I cannot perfectly keep one of thy commandments, yet I will allow myself in the breach of none. I know my flesh will hang back ; but I resolve, in the power of thy grace, to cleave to thee and thy holy ways, whatever it cost me. I am sure I cannot come off a loser by thee, and therefore I will be content with reproach, and difficulties, and hardships here, and will “ deny myself, and take up my cross and follow thee.” Lord Jesus, thy yoke is easy, thy cross is welcome ; as it is the way to thee, I lay aside all hopes of worldly happiness ; I will be content to tarry till I come to thee. Let me be poor, and low, and despised here, so I may be but admitted to live and reign with thee hereafter. Lord, thou hast my heart and hand to this agreement ; be it as the laws of the Medes and Persians, never to be reversed. To this I will stand ; in this resolution, through grace, I will live and die ; “ I have sworn, and will perform it, that “ I will keep thy righteous judgments.” I have given my free consent ; I have made my everlasting choice. Lord Jesus confirm the contract. Amen.

## CHAPTER VII.

*Containing the Motives to Conversion.*

THOUGH what is already said of the “ necessity of

conversion,” and of the “ miseries of the unconverted,” might be sufficient to induce any considering mind to resolve upon a present turning or conversion unto God ; yet, knowing what a piece of desperate obstinacy and untractableness the heart of man naturally is, I have thought it necessary to add, to the means of conversion and directions for a covenant-closure with God and Christ, some motives to persuade you hereunto.

“ Lord, fail me not now, at my last attempts. If any soul hath read hitherto, and is yet untouched, now, Lord, fasten on him, and do thy work ; now take him by the heart, overcome him, persuade him, till he say, thou hast prevailed ; for thou art stronger than I. Lord, didst thou make me a fisher of men, and I have toiled all this while, and caught nothing ? Alas ! that I should have spent my strength for nought ! and now I am casting my last. Lord Jesus, stand thou upon the shore, and direct how and where I shall spread my net ; and let me so enclose with arguments the souls I seek for, that they may not be able to get out. Now, Lord, for a multitude of souls ! now for a full draught ! O Lord God, remember me I pray thee, and strengthen me this once, O God !”

But I turn me unto you.

Men and brethren, heaven and earth call upon you ; yea, hell itself doth preach the doctrine of repentance unto you—the angels of the churches travail with you—the angels of heaven wait for you, for your repenting and turning unto God. Verily, if thou wouldst but come in, the heavenly host would take up their anthems and sing, “ Glory be to God in the highest ;” the morning-stars would sing together, and all the sons of God shout for joy, and celebrate this new creation as they did the first. Thy repentance would, as it were, make a holiday in heaven, and the glorious spirits would rejoice, in that there is a new brother added to their society, another heir born to the Lord, and the lost son received safe and sound. The true penitent’s tears are

indeed the wine that cherisheth both God and man.

If it be little that men and angels would rejoice at thy conversion, know thou that God himself would rejoice over thee, even with singing, and rest in his love. Never did Jacob with such joy weep over the neck of his Joseph, as thy heavenly Father would rejoice over thee upon thy coming in to him. Look over the story of the prodigal. Methinks I see how the aged father lays aside his state, and forgetteth his years ; behold how he runneth ! O ! the haste that mercy makes ! the sinner makes not half that speed. Methinks I see how his bowels turn, how his compassions yearn. How quick-sighted is love ! Mercy spies him a great way off ; forgets his riotous courses, unnatural rebellion, horrid unthankfulness, (not a word of these), but receives him with open arms, clasps him about his neck, kisses his lips that deserve to be loathed, the lips that had been joined to harlots ; calls for the fatted calf, the best robe, the ring, the shoes, the best cheer in heaven’s store, the best attire in heaven’s wardrobe. Yea, the joy cannot be held in his own breast. Others must be called to participate : the friends must meet and make merry ; angels must wait, but the prodigal must be set at table, under his father’s wing ; he is the joy of the feast, he is the sweet object of his father’s delight. The friends sympathize, but none knows the felicity the father takes in his new-born son, whom he hath received from the dead. Methinks I hear the music and dancing at a distance. O the melody of the heavenly choristers ! I cannot learn the song, but methinks I overhear the burden, at which all the harmonious choir with one consent strike sweetly in ; for thus goes round at heaven’s table ; “ For this my son was dead, and is alive again ; was lost and is found.” I need not farther explain the parable : God is the father, Christ is the cheer, his righteousness the robe, his grace the ornaments, ministers, saints, angels, the friends and servants, and thou that readest (if thou wilt but unfeignedly repent and turn) the

welcome prodigal, the happy instance of this grace, and blessed subject of this joy and love.

O rock ! O adamant ! what ! not moved yet ? not yet resolved to turn forthwith, and to close with mercy ? I will try thee yet once again : If one were sent to thee from the dead, wouldst thou be persuaded ? Why, hear the voice from the dead, crying to thee that thou shouldst repent : “ I pray thee that thou wouldst send him to my father’s house, (for I have five brethren), that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment. If one went to them from the dead, they will repent.” Hear, O man ! thy predecessors in impenitence preach to thee from the infernal flames, that thou shouldst repent. O look but down into the bottomless pit ! seest thou how the smoke of their torments ascendeth for ever and ever ? What thinkest thou of those chains of darkness, those instruments of cruelty ? Seest thou how the worm knaweth, how the fire rageth ? What sayest thou to that gulf of perdition ? wilt thou take up thine habitation there ? O ! hearest thou the curses and blasphemies, the weepings and wailings ; how they lament their follies, and curse their day ? How do they gnash their teeth ! how deep are their groans ! how inconceivable are their miseries ! If the shrieks of Cora, Dathan, and Abiram, were so terrible (when the earth clave asunder, and opened its mouth and swallowed them up, and all that appertained to them) that all Israel fled at the cry of them—O ! how fearful would the cry be, if God should take off the covering from the mouth of hell, and let the cry of the damned ascend in all its terrors among the children of men ; and of all their moans and miseries, this is the piercing, killing emphasis and burden, “ for ever, for ever !”

Why, as God liveth that made thy soul, thou art but few hours distant from all this, except thou “ repent and be converted.”

O ! I am even lost and swallowed up in the abundance of

those arguments that I might suggest. If there be any point of wisdom in all the world, it is to repent and come in ; if there be any thing righteous, any thing reasonable, this is it. If there be any thing in the world that may be called madness and folly, and any thing that may be counted sottish, absurd, unreasonable, it is this, “ to go on in thine unconverted state.” Let me beg of thee, as thou wouldst not wilfully destroy thyself, to sit down and weigh, besides what has been said, these following motives, and let conscience speak, if it be not reason that thou shouldst “ repent and turn.”

1. *The God that made thee does most graciously invite thee.*

First, *His most sweet and merciful nature doth invite thee.* O the kindness of God, his yearning bowels, his tender mercies ! They are infinitely above our thoughts, higher than heaven, what can we do ? deeper than hell, what can we know ? “ He is full of compassion, and gracious, long-suffering and plenteous in mercy.” This is a great argument to persuade sinners to come in, “ turn unto the Lord your God ; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.” If God would not repent of the evil, it were some discouragement to us why we should not repent. If there were no hope of mercy, it were no wonder why rebels should stand out ; but never had subjects such a gracious prince, such pity, patience, clemency, to deal with, as you have : “ Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity ?” O sinners ! see what a God you have to deal with : if you will but turn, “ he will turn again, and have compassion on you ; he will subdue your iniquities, and cast all your sins into the depths of the sea.” “ Return unto me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will return unto you.” Sinners do not fail in that they have too high thoughts of God’s mercies, but in that, 1. “ They overlook his justice. 2. They promise themselves mercy out of God’s way :” his mercy is beyond all imagination—great mercies, manifold mercies,



tender mercies, sure mercies, everlasting mercies ; and all is thy own, if thou wilt but turn. Art thou willing to come in ? Why, the Lord hath laid aside his terror, erected a throne of grace, holds forth the golden sceptre ; touch and live. Would a merciful man slay his enemy when prostrate at his feet, acknowledging his wrong, begging pardon, and offering to enter with him into a covenant of peace ? Much less will the merciful God. Study his name, Exod. xxxiv. 7. Read experience, Neh. ix. 17.

Secondly, *His soul-encouraging call and promises do invite thee.* Ah, what an earnest suitor is mercy to thee ! how lovingly, how instantly, it calleth after thee ! how passionately it wooeth thee ! “ Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause my anger to fall upon you ; for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever : only acknowledge thine iniquity. Turn, O blacksliding children, saith the Lord ; for I am married unto you ; return, and I will heal your backslidings. Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers ; yet return unto me saith the Lord.” “ As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that he turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways ; for why will ye die, O house of Israel ?” “ If the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions that he hath committed shall not be mentioned to him : in his righteousness that he hath done shall he live. Repent, and turn you from all your transgressions : so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away all your transgressions, and make you a clean heart and a new spirit : for why will ye die, O house of Israel ? for I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God : wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.”

O melting gracious words ! the voice of a GOD, and not of a man ! This is not the manner of men, for the offended

sovereign to sue to the offending traitors ! O how doth mercy follow thee and plead with thee ! Is not thy heart broken yet ? O that “ to-day you would hear his voice !”

2. *The doors of heaven are thrown open to thee, the everlasting gates are set wide for thee, and an abundant entrance into the kingdom of heaven is administered to thee.* Christ now bespeaks thee, as she her husband : “ Arise, and take possession,” 1 Kings xxi. 15. View the glory of the other world, as set forth in the map of the gospel ; get thee up into Pisgah of the promises, and lift up thine eyes northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, and that goodly mountain. Behold the Paradise of God, watered with the streams of glory. Arise and walk through the land, in the length of it, and in the breadth of it : for the land which thou seest, the Lord will give it to thee for ever, if thou wilt but return. Let me say to thee as Paul to Agrippa, “ believest thou the prophets ?” If thou believest indeed, do but view what glorious things are spoken of the city of God, and know that all this is here tendered in the name of God to thee. As verily as God is true, it shall be for ever thine, if thou wilt but thoroughly turn. Behold the city of pure transparent gold, whose foundations are garnished with all manner of precious stones, whose gates are pearls, whose light is glory, whose temple is God ; believest thou this ? if thou dost, art not thou worse than distracted, that wilt not take possession when the gates are flung open to thee, and thou art bid to enter ? O ye sons of folly, will ye refuse the kingdom ? Behold the Lord takes you up into the mountain, shows you the kingdom of heaven and all the glory thereof, and tells you, “ All this will I give you, if you will fall down and worship me ;” if you will submit to mercy, accept my Son, and serve me in righteousness and holiness. “ O fools, and slow of heart to believe !” Will you seek and serve the world, and neglect eternal glory ? What ! not enter into Paradise, when the flaming sword, which was once set to

keep you out, is now used to drive you in ! But you will say, I am uncharitable to think you infidels and unbelievers. Why, what shall I think ? Either you are desperate unbelievers, that do not credit it, or distracted, that you know and believe the excellence and eternity of this glory, and yet do so fearfully neglect it. Surely, you have either no faith or no reason, and I had almost said, conscience shall tell you so before I leave you.

Do but attend to what is offered you : O blessed kingdom ; a “ kingdom of glory,” a “ kingdom of righteousness,” a “ kingdom of peace,” and an “ everlasting kingdom.” Here thou shalt dwell, here thou shalt reign for ever, and the Lord shall seat thee on a throne of glory, and with his own hand shall set the royal diadem upon thine head ; and give thee a crown, not of thorns, for there shall be no sinning nor suffering there—not of gold, but a “ crown of life,” a “ crown of righteousness,” a “ crown of glory ;” yea, “ thou shalt put on glory as a robe,” and shalt “ shine like the sun in the firmament, in the glory of thy Father.” In short, thou shalt be made like unto the “ angels of God,” and “ behold his face in righteousness.” Look in now and tell me, dost thou yet believe ? if not, conscience must pronounce thee an infidel ; for it is the very “ word of God” that I speak.

But, if thou say thou believest, let me next know thy resolution. Wilt thou embrace this for thy happiness ? Wilt thou forego thy sinful gains, thy forbidden pleasures ? Wilt thou trample on the world’s esteem, and stop thine ears to her flatteries, and wrest thee out of her embraces ? Wilt thou be content to take up with reproach and poverty, if they lie in the way to heaven, and follow the Lord with humble self-denial in a mortified life ? If so, all is thine, and that for ever.

And art thou not fairly offered ? Is it not pity but he should be damned that will needs go on and perish, when all this may be had for the taking ? Wilt thou take God at his

word, and rid thy hands of thy holdfast of the world, and rid thy hands of thy sins, and lay hold on eternal life ? If not, let conscience tell thee whether thou art not distracted or bewitched, that thou shouldst neglect so happy a choice, by which thou mightest be made for ever.

3. *God will settle unspeakable privileges at present upon thee.* Though the full of your blessedness shall be deferred till hereafter, yet God will give you no little things in hand.

He will redeem you from your thralldom. The serpent shall bruise your heel, but you shall bruise his head. He shall deliver you from the present evil world. Prosperity shall not destroy you ; adversity shall not separate between him and you. He will redeem you from the power of the grave, and make the king of terrors a messenger of peace to you. He will take out the curse from the cross. And make affliction the fining-pot, to purify the metal. He will save you from the arrest of the law, and turn the curse into a blessing to you. He hath the keys of hell and death, and shutteth that no man openeth ; and he will shut its mouth as once he did the lions, that you shall not be hurt of the second death.

But he will not only save you from misery, but install you into unspeakable prerogatives. He will bestow himself upon you ; he will be a friend unto you, and a father to you. He will be a sun and a shield to you. In a word, he will be a God to you. And what can be said more ? What may you expect that a God should do for you, and be to you ? that he will be, that he will do. She that marries a prince, expects he should do for her like a prince, that she may live in a suitable state, and have an answerable dowry. He that hath a king for his father, or a friend, expects he should do for him like a king. Alas ! the kings and monarchs of the earth so much above you, are but like the painted butterflies amongst the rest of their kind. As he doth infinitely exceed the glory and power of his glittering dust, so he will, beyond all proportion, exceed in doing for his favourites

whatever princes can do for theirs. He will “give you grace and glory, and withhold no good thing from you.” He will take you for his sons and daughters, and make you heirs of his promises, and establish his everlasting covenant with you. He will justify you from all that law, conscience, Satan can charge upon you. He will give you free access into his presence, and accept your person, and receive your prayers. He will abide in you, and make you the man of his secrets, and hold a constant and friendly communion with you. His ear shall be open, his door open, his store open, at all times to you. His blessings shall rest upon you, and he will make your enemies to serve you, and work about “all things for good unto you.”

4. *The terms of mercy are brought as low as possible to you.* God has stooped as low to sinners as with honour he can. He will not be thought an author of sin, nor stain the glory of his holiness : and whither could he come lower than he hath, unless he should do this ? He hath abated the impossible terms of the first covenant. He doth not impose any thing unreasonable or impossible, as a condition of life upon you. Two things were necessary to be done according to the tenor of the first covenant, by you : 1. “That you should fully satisfy the demands of justice for past offences. 2. That you should perform personally, perfectly, and perpetually, the whole law for the time to come.” Both these are to us impossible. But behold God’s gracious abatement in both. He doth not stand upon satisfaction ; he is content to take off the surety (and he of his own providing too) what he might have exacted from you. He declares himself to have received a ransom, and that he expects nothing but that you should accept his Son, and “he shall be righteousness and redemption to you.” And, for the future obedience, here he is content to yield to your weakness, and omit the rigour. He doth not stand upon perfection as a condition of life, though he still insists upon it as his due, but is content to accept of sincerity. Though

you cannot pay the full debt, he will accept you according to that which you have, and take willingness for doing, and the purpose for the performance. And, if you come in his Christ, and set your hearts to please him, and make it the chief of your care, he will approve and reward you, though the vessel be marred in your hands.

O ! consider your Maker’s condescension ; let me say to you, as Naaman’s servant to him, “My father, if the Prophet had bid thee do some great thing, would you not have done it ? How much rather when he saith to thee, wash and be clean !” If God had demanded some terrible, some severe and rigorous thing of you, to escape an eternal damnation, would you not have done it ? Suppose it had been to spend all your days in sorrow in some howling wilderness, or pine yourselves with famine, or to “offer the fruit of your bodies, for the sin of your souls,” would you not have thankfully accepted eternal redemption, though these had been the conditions ? Nay, farther ; if God should have told you, that you should have suffered in the fire for millions of ages, or been so long tormented in hell, would you not have gladly accepted it ? Alas ! all these are not so much as one sand in the glass of eternity. If your offended Creator should have holden you but one year upon the rack, and then bidden you come and forsake your sins, accept Christ, and serve him a few years in self-denial, or lie in this case for ever and ever, do you think you should have stuck at the offer, and disputed the terms, and have been unresolved whether you were to accept of the motion ? O sinner, return and live ; why shouldst thou die, when life is to be had for the taking, when mercy seems beholden to thee (as it were) to be saved ? Couldst thou say, indeed, “Lord, I knew thee that thou wast a hard man,” thou hadst some little excuse ; but when the God of heaven has stooped so low, and condescended so far, if now thou shouldst stand off, who shall plead for thee ?

*Objection.* Notwithstanding all these abatements, I am no

more able to perform these conditions (in themselves so easy) of faith, repentance, and sincere obedience, than to satisfy and fulfil the law.

*Answer.* These you may perform by God's grace enabling ; whereas the other are naturally impossible in this state, even to believers themselves. But let the next consideration serve for a fuller answer.

5. *Wherein you are impotent, God doth offer grace to enable you.* " I have stretched out mine hand, and no man regarded." What though you are plunged into the ditch of the misery from which you cannot get out ! Christ offereth to help you out : he reacheth out his hand to you, and, if you perish, it is for refusing his help. " Behold I stand at the door and knock ; if any man open to me, I will come in." What though you are poor, and wretched, and blind, and naked ! Christ offereth a cure for your blindness, a covering for your nakedness, a remedy for thy poverty ; he tenders you his righteousness, his grace. " I counsel thee to buy of me gold, that thou mayest be rich ; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed ; anoint thy eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see. Do you say, the condition is impossible ; for I have not wherewith to buy ? You must know that this buying is " without money and without price." This buying is by begging and seeking with diligence and constancy in the use of God's means. God commandeth thee to know him, and to fear him. Dost thou say, Yea, but my mind is blinded, and my heart is hardened, from his fear ? I answer, God doth offer to enlighten thy mind, and to teach thee this fear, that is presented to thy choice. " For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord." So, that now, if men live in ignorance and estrangement from the Lord, it is because they " will not understand and desire the knowledge of his ways." " If thou criest after knowledge, if thou seekest her as silver, &c., then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." Is not here a fair

offer ? " Turn ye at my reproof ; behold I will pour out my Spirit unto you." Though of yourselves you can do nothing, yet you may do all through his Spirit enabling you, and he doth offer assistance to you. God bids you " wash and make you clean." You say you are unable, as much " as the leopard to wash out his spots. Yea, but the Lord doth offer to purge you ; so that, if you be filthy still, it is through your own wilfulness. " I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged." " O Jerusalem, wilt thou not be made clean ? When shall it once be ?" God doth wait when you will be made clean, when you will yield to his motions, accept of his offers, and let him do for you, and in you, what you cannot do for yourselves. You do not know how much God will do, upon your importunity, if you will be but restless and instant with him.

Though God hath not bound himself, by express promise to wicked men, to give them grace in the diligent use of the means, yet he hath given them abundance of encouragement to expect it from him, if they seek it earnestly in his way. His most gracious nature is abundant encouragement. If a rich and most bountiful man should see thee in misery, and bid thee come to his door, wouldst thou not with confidence expect, at thy coming, to find some relief ? Thou art not able to believe nor repent : God appoints thee to use such and such means, in order to thy obtaining faith and repentance ; doth not this argue that God will bestow these upon thee, if thou dost ply him diligently in prayer, meditation, reading, hearing, self-examination, and the rest of his means ? Otherwise God would but mock his poor creatures, to put them upon these self-denying endeavours, and then, when they have been hard put to it, and continued waiting upon him for grace, deny them at last. Surely, if a sweet-natured man would not deal thus, much less will the most merciful and gracious God.

I intended to have added many other arguments, but

these have swollen under my hands ; and I hope the judicious reader will rather look upon the weight than number.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### *Conclusion.*

AND now, my brethren, let me know your minds ; what do you intend to do ? will you go and die ? or will you set upon a thorough and speedy conversion, and lay hold on eternal life ? How long will ye linger in Sodom ? “ How long will ye halt between two opinions ? ” Have ye not yet resolved whether Christ or Barabbas, whether bliss or torment, whether the land of Cabul or the Paradise of God, be the better choice ? Is it a disputable case, whether the Abana or Parphar of Damascus be better than all the streams of Eden ; or whether the vile stream of sin is to be preferred before the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb ? Can the world in good earnest do that for you that Christ can ? Will it stand by you to eternity ? Will pleasures, land, titles, treasures, descend with you ? If not, had you not need look after somewhat that will ? What mean you to stand wavering ? Shall I lead you at last no farther than Agrippa ? but almost persuaded : why, you are for ever lost if left here : as good not at all, as not altogether Christians. You are half in the mind to give over your former negligent life, and set to a strict and holy course ; you could wish you were as some others are, and could do as they can do. How long will you rest in idle wishes and fruitless purposes ? When will you come to a fixed, firm, and full resolve ? Do not you see how Satan beguiles you, by tempting you to delays ? How long hath he toiled you on in the way of

perdition ! How many years have you been purposed to mend ! What if God should have taken you off this while !

Well, put me not off with a dilatory answer : tell me not of hereafter ; I must have your immediate consent : if you be not now resolved, while the Lord is treating with you and courting you, much less are you like to be hereafter, when these impressions are worn out, and you are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Will you give me your hand ? Will you set open the door, and give the Lord Jesus the full and ready possession ? Will you put your names unto this covenant ? Will you subscribe ? What do you resolve upon ? If you are still upon your delays, my labour is lost, and all is like to come to nothing. Fain I would that you should now put in your adventures. Come, cast in your lot ; make your choice. “ Now is the accepted time ; now is the day of salvation : to-day if you will hear his voice. ” Why should not this be the day whence thou shouldst be able to date thy happiness ? Why shouldst thou venture a day longer in this dangerous and dreadful condition ? What if God should this night require thy soul ! “ O ! that thou mightest know, in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace, before they be hid from thy eyes ! ” This is thy day, and it is but a day. Others have had their day, and have received their doom, and now art thou brought upon the stage of this world, here to act thy part for the whole eternity. Remember, thou art now upon thy “ good behaviour ” for everlasting ; if thou makest not a wise choice now, thou art undone for ever. Look what thy present choice is ; such must thine eternal condition be.

And is it true indeed ? Are life and death at thy choice ? Yea, it is as true as truth is. Why, then, what hinders but that thou shouldst be happy ? Nothing doth or can hinder, but thine own wilful neglect or refusal. It was the passage of the Eunuch to Philip : “ See here is water ; what doth hinder me to be baptized ? ” See, I may say to thee, See, here is Christ, here is mercy, pardon, life ; what hinders but

that thou shouldst be pardoned and saved ? One of the martyrs, as he was praying at the stake, had his pardon set by him in a box, which indeed he refused deservedly, because upon unworthy terms ; but here the terms are more honourable and easy. O sinner ! wilt thou perish with thy pardon by thee ? Why, do but forthwith give thy consent to Christ, to renounce thy sins, deny thyself, take up the yoke and the cross, and thou carriest the day ; Christ is thine ; pardon, peace, life, blessedness, are all thine : and is not this an offer worth embracing ? Why shouldst thou hesitate or doubtfully dispute about the case ? Is it not past controversy whether God be better than sin, and glory than vanity ? Why shouldst thou forsake thy own mercy, and sin against thy own life ? When wilt thou shake off thy sloth, and lay by thine excuses ? “ Boast not thyself of to-morrow ; thou knowest not ” where this night may lodge thee.

Beloved, now the Holy Spirit is striving with you ; he will not always strive. Hast thou not felt thine heart warmed by the word, and been almost persuaded to leave off thy sins and come unto God ? Hast thou not felt some good motions in thy mind, wherein thou hast been warned of thy danger, and told what thy careless course would end in ? It may be thou art like young Samuel, who, when the Lord called once and again, knew not the voice of the Lord, but these motions are the offers, and callings, and strivings, of the Spirit : O ! take the advantage of the tide, and know the day of thy visitation.

Now the Lord Jesus stretcheth wide his arms to receive you ; he beseecheth you by us. How movingly, how meltingly, how pitifully, how compassionately, he calleth ! the church is put into a sudden ecstasy upon the sound of his voice, the voice of my beloved. O ! wilt thou turn a deaf ear to his voice ? Is it not the voice that breaketh the cedars, and maketh mountains to skip like a calf ? that shaketh the wilderness, and divideth the flames of fire ? It is not Sinai's thunder, but a soft and still voice : it is not the

voice of Mount Ebal, a voice of cursing and terror, but the voice of Mount Gerizim, the voice of blessing and glad tidings of good things : it is not the voice of the trumpet, nor the voice of war, but a message of peace from the King of Peace. Methinks it should be with thee as with the spouse ; “ My soul failed when he spake.” I may say to thee, O sinner, as Martha to her sister, “ The Master is come, and he calleth for thee.” O, now, with Mary, arise quickly, and come unto him. How sweet are his invitations ! he crieth in the open concourse, “ If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.” How free is he ! he excludeth none : “ Whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely.” “ Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither. Come, eat of my bread, drink of the wine that I have mingled. Forsake the foolish and live.” “ Come unto me ; take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, and ye shall find rest to your souls.” “ Him that cometh to me will I in nowise cast out.” How doth he bemoan the obstinate refuser ! “ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem ! how often would I have gathered thy children as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not ! ” “ Behold me, behold me ; I have stretched out my hands all the day to a rebellious people.” O ! be persuaded now at last to throw yourselves into the arms of love.

Behold, O ye sons of men, the Lord Jesus hath thrown open the prison, and now he cometh to you, as the magistrates once to them. Acts xvi. 39. , and beseecheth you to come out. If it were from a palace or paradise that Christ did call you, it were no wonder if you were unwilling ; and yet how easily was Adam beguiled thence ! But it is from your prison. Sirs, from your chains, from the dungeon, from the darkness, that he calleth you, and yet will you not come ? He calls you unto liberty, and yet will you not hearken ? His yoke is easy, his laws are liberty, his service is freedom ; and, whatever prejudices you have against his ways, if a God may be believed, you shall find them all

pleasure and peace, and shall taste sweetness and joy unutterable, and take infinite delight and felicity in them.

Behold, I am loath to leave you ; I cannot tell how to give you over. What ! shall I leave you as I found you at last ? Have you read hitherto, and not resolved upon a present abandoning all your sins, and closing with Jesus Christ ? Alas ! what shall I say ? what shall I do ? Will you turn off all my importunity ? Have I run in vain ? Have I used so many arguments, and spent so much time to persuade you, and you sit down at last in disappointment ? But it is a small matter that you turn me off ; you put a slight upon the God that made you ; you reject the bowels and beseechings of a Saviour, and will be found resisters of the Holy Ghost ; if you will not now be prevailed with to repent and be converted.

Well, though I have called you long, and you have refused, I shall yet this once more lift up my voice like a trumpet, and cry from the highest places of the city, before I conclude. Once more I shall call after regardless sinners, that, if it be possible, I may awaken them : “ O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord ! ” Unless you be resolved to die, lend your ears to the last calls of mercy. Behold, in the name of God I make open proclamation to you : “ Harken unto me, O ye children ; hear instruction and be wise, and refuse it not.”

“ Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money : come ye, buy and eat ; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not ? Harken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me ; hear, and your soul shall live ; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.”

Ho, every one that is sick of any manner of disease, or

is possessed with an evil spirit, whether of pride, fury, lust, or covetousness, come ye to the physician, bring your sick ; lo, here is he that “ healeth all manner of sicknesses, and all manner of diseases among the people ! ”

Ho, every one that is in distress from guilt, gather yourselves unto Christ, and he will become a Captain over you ; he will be your protection from the arrests of the law, he will save you from the hand of justice. Behold he is an open sanctuary to you ; he is a known refuge. Away with your sins, and come in unto him, lest the avenger of blood seize you, lest devouring wrath overtake you.

Ho, every ignorant sinner, come and buy eye-salve, that thou mayest see. Away with thy excuses ; thou art for ever lost, if thou continue in this state. But accept of Christ for thy prophet, and he will be a light unto thee. Cry unto him for knowledge, study his word, take pains about the principles of religion, humble thyself before him, and he will teach thee his way, and make thee wise unto salvation. But, if thou wilt not follow him in the painful use of his means, but sit down because thou hast but one talent, he will condemn thee for a wicked and slothful servant.

Ho, every profane sinner, come in and live : return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy on thee ; be entreated. O ! return—come : thou that hast filled thy mouth with oaths and execrations, all manner of sins and blasphemies shall be forgiven thee, if thou wilt but thoroughly turn unto Christ and come in. Though thou wert as unclean as “ Magdalen, yet put away thy whoredoms out of thy sight, and thy adulteries from between thy breasts,” and give up thyself unto Christ, as a vessel of holiness, alone for his use ; and then, “ though thy sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool ; and though they be as crimson, they shall be white as snow.”

Hear, O ye drunkards ! “ how long will ye be drunken ? put away your wine.” Give yourselves up unto Christ, to live soberly, righteously, and godly ; embrace his righteousness ; accept his government ; and, though you

have been vile, he will wash you.

Hear, O ye wicked companions, whose delight is in vain and wicked society, to sport away your time in carnal mirth and jollity with them ! come in at wisdom's call, and choose her and her ways, and you shall live.

Hear, O ye scorers, hear the word of the Lord ! though you make a sport at godliness and the professors thereof, though you have made a scorn of Christ and of his ways, yet even to you doth he call, to gather you under the wings of his mercy. In a word, though you should be found among the worst of the rebellious, yet, upon your thorough conversion, you “ shall be washed, you shall be justified, you shall be sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”

Ho, every formal professor ! thou art but a luke-warm Christian, and retest in the form of godliness. Give over thy halving and thy halting ; be a throughout Christian, and be zealous and repent ; and then, though thou hadst been an offence to Christ, thou shalt be the joy of his heart.

And now bear witness that mercy hath been offered you : “ I call heaven and earth to record against you this day, that I, have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing ; therefore choose life, that you may live.” I can but entreat and warn you ; I cannot compel you to be happy ; if I could, I would. What answer will you send me with to my Master ? Let me speak to you as Abraham's servant to them, “ And now if ye will deal kindly and truly with my Master, tell me ?” O, for such a happy answer as Rebecca gave them ! “ And they said, We will call the damsel, and inquire at her mouth ; and they called Rebecca, and said unto her, wilt thou go with this man ? and she said, I will go.” O that I had but this from you ! why should I be your accuser, who thirst for your salvation ? why should the passionate pleadings and entreaties of mercy be turned into the horrid aggravation of your obstinacy, and additions to your misery ? Judge in yourselves : Do you not think their

condemnation will be doubly dreadful that shall still go on in their sins, after all endeavours to recall them. Doubtless “ it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, yea, for Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment, than for you !”

Beloved, if you have any pity for your perishing souls, close with the present offers of mercy. If the God that made you have any authority with you, obey his command, and come in. If you are not the despisers of grace, and would not shut up the doors of mercy against yourselves, repent and be converted ; let not heaven stand open for you in vain ; let not the Lord Jesus bid you buy without money and without price in vain ; let not his ministers and his Spirit strive with you in vain, and leave you now at last unpersuaded, lest the sentence go forth against you : “ The bellows are burnt, the lead is consumed of the fire ; the founder melteth in vain : reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them.”

Father of spirits, take the heart in hand that is too hard for my weakness. Do not thou end, though I have done. A word from thy effectual power will do the work. O thou that hast the key of David, that openeth and no man shutteth, open thou this heart, as thou didst Lydia's, and let the King of Glory enter in, and make this soul thy captive ; let not the tempter harden him in delays ; let him not stir from this place, nor take his eyes from these lines, till he resolve to forego his sins, and accept of life on thy self-denying terms. In thy name, O Lord God, did I go forth to these labours ; in thy name do I shut them up. Let not all the time they have cost be lost hours ; let not all the thoughts of the heart, and all the pains that have been about them, be but lost labour. Lord, put in thy hand into the heart of this reader, and send thy Spirit, as once thou didst Philip, to join himself to the chariot of the Eunuch, while he was reading the word. And, though I should never know it while I live, yet I beseech thee, O Lord God, let it



be found, at that day, that some souls are converted by these labours ; and let some be able to stand forth and say, that by these persuasions, they were won unto thee. Amen, Amen. Let him that readeth say, Amen.

## COUNSEL FOR PERSONAL AND FAMILY GODLINESS.

BELOVED, I despair of ever bringing you to salvation without sanctification, or possessing you of happiness without persuading you to holiness. God knows, I have not the least hope ever to see one of you in heaven, except you be converted and sanctified, and exercise your lives unto godliness. I beseech you, study personal godliness and family godliness.

I. *Personal Godliness.* Let it be your first care to set up Christ in your hearts ; see that you make all your worldly interests to stoop to him ; that you be entirely and unreservedly devoted unto him. If you wilfully, and deliberately, and ordinarily, harbour any sin, you are undone. See that you unfeignedly take the law of Christ as the rule of your words, thoughts, and actions, and subject your whole man, members, and minds, faithfully to him. If you have not a true respect to all God's commandments, you are unsound at heart. O, study to get the image and impress of Christ upon you within. Begin with your hearts ; else you build without any foundation. Labour to get a saving change within, or else all external performances will be to no purpose ; and then study to show forth the power of godliness in the life. Let piety be your first and chief business : it is the highest point of justice to give God his due. Beware that none of you be a prayerless person ; for that is a most certain discovery that you are a Christless and graceless person, or one that is a very stranger to the fear of

God. Suffer not your Bibles to gather dust. See that you converse daily with the word. That man can never lay claim to blessedness whose delight is not in the law of the Lord. Let meditation and self-examination be your daily exercise.

But piety without charity is but the half of Christianity, or rather impious hypocrisy. We may not divide the tables ; see therefore that you do justly, and love mercy, and let equity and charity run like an even thread throughout all your dealings. Be you temperate in all things, and let chastity and sobriety be your undivided companions. Let truth and purity, seriousness and modesty, heaviness and gravity, be the constant ornaments of your speech. Let patience and humility, simplicity and sincerity, shine out in all the parts of your conversations. See that you forget and forgive wrongs, and requite them with kindness, as you would be found the children of the Most High. Be merciful in your censures, and put the most favourable construction upon your brethren's carriage that their actions will reasonably bear. Be slow in promising ; punctual in fulfilling. Let meekness and innocence, affableness, yieldingness, and simplicity, commend your conversations to all men. Let none of your relations want that love and loyalty, reverence and duty, that tenderness, care, and vigilance, which their several places and capacities call for. This is thorough godliness. I charge you before the most high God, that none of you be found a swearer, or a liar, or a lover of evil company, or a scoffer, or malicious, or covetous, or a drunkard, or a glutton, unrighteous in his dealing, unclean in his living, or a quarreller, or a thief, or a backbiter, or a railer ; for I denounce unto you from the living God, that destruction and damnation are the end of all such.

II. *Family Godliness.* He that hath set up Christ in his heart, will be sure to study to set him up in his house. Let every family with you be a Christian church, every house a house of prayer. Let every householder say with Joshua, “

I and my house will serve the Lord,” and resolve, with David, “I will walk in my house with a perfect heart.” Let me press upon you a few duties in general.

First, Let religion be in your families, not as a matter by-the-by, (to be minded at leisure, when the world will give you leave,) but the standing business of the house. Let them have your prayers as duly as their meals. Are there any of your families, but have time for their taking food ? wretched man ! canst thou not find time to pray in ?

Secondly, Settle it upon your hearts, that your souls are bound up in the souls of your family. They are committed unto you : and if they be lost through your neglect, they will be required at your hands. Sirs, if you do not, you shall know that the charge of souls is a heavy charge, and that the blood of souls is a heavy guilt. O man, hast thou a charge of souls to answer for, and dost thou not yet bestir thyself for them, that their blood be not found in thy skirts ? Wilt thou do more for immortal souls than thou wilt do for the beasts that perish ? What dost thou do for thy children and servants ? Thou providest meat and drink for them agreeable to their nature ; and dost thou not the same for thy beasts ? Thou givest them medicines, and cherishest them when they are sick ; and dost thou not the same for thy beasts ? More particularly,

1. Let the solemn reading of the word, and singing of Psalms, be your family exercises. See Christ singing with his family (viz. his disciples,) Matth. xxvi. 30.

2. Let every person in your families be duly called to an account of their profiting by the word, heard or read, as they are about doing your own business. This is a duty of consequence unspeakable, and would be the means to bring those under your charge to remember and profit by what they receive. See Christ’s example in calling his family to account, Matth. xvi. 11, 13, 15.

3. Often take an account of the souls under your care, concerning their spiritual states ; (herein you must be

followers of Christ, Matth. xiii. 10, 36, 51. Mark iv. 10, 11.) make inquiry into their condition ; insist much upon the sinfulness and misery of their natural state, and upon the necessity of regeneration and conversion, in order to their salvation. Admonish them gravely of their sins ; encourage their beginnings ; follow them earnestly ; and let them have no quiet for you, until you see in them a saving change. This is a duty of very great consequence, but, I am afraid, most fearfully neglected. Doth not conscience say, “ thou art the man ?”

4. Look to the strict sanctifying of the Sabbath by all your household. Many poor families have little time else. O improve but your Sabbath-days as diligently, in labouring for knowledge and doing your Maker’s work, as you do the other days, in doing your own work, and I doubt not but you may come to some proficiency.

5. Let the morning and evening sacrifice of solemn prayer be daily offered up in all your families. Beware ye be not found among the families that call not upon God’s name : for why should there be wrath from the Lord upon your families ? O miserable families, without God in the world, that are without family prayers ! What ! have you so many family sins, family wants, family mercies ; what ! and yet no family prayers ! How do you pray with all prayer and supplication, if you do not with family prayer ? Say not, “ I have no time. ” What ! hast thou not all thy time on purpose to serve God and save thy soul, and yet is this it for which thou canst find no time ? Find but a heart, and I will find time. Pinch out of your meals and sleep rather than want for prayer. Say not, “ my business will not give leave :” this is the greatest business, to save thyself and the souls committed to thee. In a word, the blessing of all is to be got by prayer, and what is thy business without God’s blessing ? Say not, “ I am not able. ” Use the one talent, and God will increase. Helps are to be had till thou art better able. But if there be no other remedy, thou must

join with thine able neighbour ; God hath special regard to joint prayer, and therefore you must improve family advantages for the performing of it.

6. Put every one in your families upon private prayer. Observe whether they do perform it. Get them the help of a form if they need it, till they are able to do without it. Direct them how to pray, by reminding them of their sins, wants, and mercies, the materials of prayer. This was the practice of John and Jesus, Luke xi. 1, 2, &c.

7. Set up catechising in your families, at the least once every week. Have you no dread of the Almighty's charge, that you should " teach these things diligently to your children, and talk of them as you sit in your houses ?" and train them up in the way wherein they should go. " Hath God so commanded Abraham, that he would " teach his children and household," and that he had many " instructed servants," and given such a promise to him thereupon, and will you not put in for a share, neither in the praise nor the promise ? Hath Christ honoured catechising with his presence, and will you not own it with your practice ? Say not, they are careless and will not learn. What have you your authority for, if not to use it for God and the good of their souls ? You Nvill call them up, and force them to do your work ; and should you not at least be as zealous in putting them upon God's work ? Say not, they are dull, and are not capable. If they be dull, God requires of you the more pains and patience : but, so dull as they are, you will make them learn how to work ; and can they not learn how to live ? Are they capable of the mysteries of your trade, and are they not capable of the plain principles of religion ? Well, as ever you would see the growth of religion, the cure of ignorance, the remedy of profaneness, the downfall of error, fulfil you my joy in going through with this duty.

Will you answer the calls of divine Providence ? Would you remove the incumbent, or prevent the impendent

calamities ? Would you plant nurseries for the church of God ? Would you that God should build your houses and bless your substance ? Would you that your children should bless you ? O then set up piety in your families, as ever you would be blessed or be a blessing. Let your hearts and your houses be the temples of the living God, in which his worship (according to all the afore-mentioned directions) may be with constancy reverently performed. " He that, being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. "

## AWAKENING QUESTIONS PROPOUNDED TO THE UNCONVERTED.

THAT I may reach every man's case, I shall speak something to the unconverted and something to the converted.

For the unconverted there are six questions, which I would advise them to put to their souls.

*Q. I. In what state did my soul come into the world ?* Was it not in the state of death ? a state of wrath ? Sirs, awake and hethink yourselves where you are, and whither you are going. While thou art in thy natural, unconverted, unbelieving state, all your sins are unpardoned, and the wrath of God abideth on you. Suppose you saw a poor creature hanging over a burning fiery furnace, by nothing but a slender thread like to break every moment, would not your hearts ache for such a one ? Sirs, it is your very case. You hang over the gulf of perdition by nothing but the small thread of life, which you know not but it may break the next moment, and then where are you ? Is this a case for you to go on contentedly and thoughtlessly in ?

*Q. II. What condition is my soul now in ?* Am I changed

and renewed by conversion, or am I not ? Speak conscience, hath this man, this woman, been thoroughly and savingly changed, both in heart and life ? Where are your evidences ? Can you show the marks of the Lord Jesus upon your souls ? Let your conscience answer. Where was the place ? what were the means ? when was the time that thy soul was thoroughly renewed ? At least, if you cannot show the time, place, or means, can you prove the thing ? Can you say with him, One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, I now see ? Sirs, be not deceived : I tell you, whatever you be, and whatever you do, nothing will avail you to salvation, except ye be new creatures.

*Q. III. What if I should lose my soul ?* This is very possible. Yea, it is the case of most ; there are but few, few of the children of men, that do escape safe to heaven. Sirs, beware of your danger, and fear lest a promise being made of your entering into rest, any of you should at length come short of it. Suppose a man were to travel through some perilous wood or wilderness, having but one jewel in all the world, in which his all was bound up ; and should see some stand on one hand, and some on the other ; and hear a company in this place, and another in that, crying out, under the hands of some cruel robbers : O, in what fear would this traveller go, lest he should lose his jewel, and be robbed of all at once ! Why, thou art the man ; this traveller is thyself ; this jewel is thy soul ; this wilderness, or wood, is this world. Thou art to travel through numerous sins, legions of devils, a whole world of temptations. These are the robbers that do lie in wait for thy soul ; and, if all that these can do can keep thee out of heaven, thou shalt never come there. O ! what if thy pride of worldliness, thy delays and triflings in religion, should at last betray thy soul into the robbers' hands ! Other losses may be repaired ; but, thy soul being once lost, Christ is lost : heaven, all, lost for evermore.

*Q. IV. What do I do for my soul ?* What ! have I a soul, an immortal soul, to care for, and look no better after it, nor

bestow any more of my time or pains upon it, any more of my thoughts about it ! When Augustus, the Emperor, saw the outlandish women carry apes, and such strange kind of creatures, in the street in their arms, he asked. What ! have the women in these countries no children ? So it may be said of many among us, that are early and late at their worldly business, but let the care of religion lie by neglected--What ! have these men no souls ? Why, man, hast thou a soul, and yet dost so little in thy closet, so little in thy family, from day to day, for it ? What meanest thou, O sleeper ? Arise, call upon thy God, that thou perish not. What will become of thy soul, if thou lookest to it only at this careless rate ?

*Q. V. What if God should this night require thy soul ? Where would death land thee ?* There was one that promised himself many merry days and years, as it is likely thou dost, but that same night God called for his soul. Sirs, are you in your proper postures ? Are you fit to die ? O ! dare not to live, in such a case, in that course in which you are not fit to die ?

*Q. VI. What a happy case were I in, if I had but secured my soul ?* O ! if this were but once done, how sweetly mightest thou live ! Then thou mightest eat thy bread, and drink thy wine with a merry heart, when assured that God accepteth thee and thy works. Then thou mightest lie down in peace, rise up in peace, go out and come home in peace. Then thou mightest look death in the face, thou mightest look dangers in the face, yea, look devils in the face, and never be afraid. O Sirs ! if there be any insurance office for souls in all the world, one would think you should be seeking it.

And thus much for the questions, which, though of use to all, yet were intended chiefly for unconverted, impenitent souls.

## COUNSELS FOR THE CONVERTED.

Counsel I. *THAT you put hard to it to get that by these hazardous opportunities, that may quit all your cost.* What pity is it that you shall adventure much, and yet gain but little ! How dismal would it be, if you should at last suffer deeply for conscientious attendance upon God in such seasons ; and, when you come into prison, or into banishment, find that you had not got that by them that would bear you out !

Counsel II. *That you value no mercy barely as it serves in content to your flesh, but as it stands in order to eternity, and may serve the furthering your Maker's glory.* God hath preserved your liberties, and has restored mine. But what of all this ? Unless we improve our liberties for eternity, what are we better than those that are in prison, if this be all the advantage we have, a little more content to the flesh ? The cypher, put to the figure, is of great signification ; but, set by itself, it signifies nothing at all. These creature-comforts, separated from their respect to God and eternity are of no value ; but, in order to these ends, they signify much. We have ease and fulness, when many others are in pain and poverty ; and we have much the start of them, if we be wds to improve our health, in laying in apace against a sick day, and preparing apace for eternity, and serve the Lord with more diligence, and cheerfulness, and gladness of heart, in the abundance of all things. But, if this be all we have by it, that our bodies do lie a little softer, and our palates are gratified with a little more delight, what profit have we by our health and estates ? If they that are sick or poor, do love the Lord as well, and serve the Lord as much as we, they have the advantage of us ; and better it were for us to be poor and sick, as they are.

Counsel III. *Rest not in probabilities for heaven, but labour for certainties.* Beloved, certainty may be had, else the counsel

of God to make our calling and election sure is in vain ; else the experience of the saints were but delusion, who tell us they know they are passed from death to life ; else the power of self-reflection were to no purpose, and the spirit which is in man would not know the things of the man. Now, if a certainty must be had, will you not put in for it, and turn every stone that you may get it ? Sirs, now, if ever, you have need to push hard to get assurance. We are at miserable uncertainties for all outward enjoyments ; we know not how soon we may be called to part with them all. Christians, what do you mean ? Will you be content to have nothing sure ? Will you not settle your everlasting condition, now you are so unsettled as to your outward condition ? What will you do in the day of visitation, when extremity comes in upon you, if you have no assurance that God will receive you. It would make one's heart tremble to think of being upon such a fearful temptation as to part with all for Christ, and not to be sure of him neither. O man, what an advantage will the tempter now have upon thee, wien he shall suggest, “ Wilt thou be such a fool as to let go all at once ? Thou seest heaven is not sure, Christ is not sure ? therefore keep the world, whilst thou hast it, and hold what thou hast sure.” Beloved, what a fearful slighting of God, and contempt of heaven, and glory, and all the promises, doth this argue, that you can be content to be at uncertainties, whether they be yours or not ! How many of you are there that do not know whether you be going to heaven or to hell ! And what desperate carelessness doth this argue, to go on from week to week in such a case ! Some hopes you have that you shall do well ; but put me not off with hopes. Never be satisfied till you are able to say, not only I hope I shall be saved, but I know I am passed from death to life ; “ I know that, when the earthly house of this tabernacle shall be dissolved, I have a building not made with hands,” &c.

Counsel IV. *Be not satisfied with the possession of grace, but*

*reach after the growth.* Do not think all is done when you have obtained the evidence of grace, but endeavour hard towards the increase. That person who doth not desire and design perfection, never came up to sincerity. He that desires grace truly, desires it not barely as a bridge to heaven, and so to seek no more, than will just bear his charges thither ; but he desires it for its own sake, and therefore desires the height of it. That person that desires grace only for heaven's sake, and inquires what is the lowest measure of grace that any may have come to heaven (by which he meaneth but to be saved from misery) upon this design, that, if he could but come to that pitch, he would desire no more ; that person is rotten at the heart. Christians, the Lord doth expect of you that you should not be babes and dwarfs ; he looks, now especially, that you should make some progress. What do you more than heretofore ? Let me commend you to Paul's study, Phil. iii. 12, &c. It argues a base and unworthy spirit, to content ourselves with little things in religion.

Counsel V. *Labour that holiness may become your nature, and religion your business.* Then you are come to somewhat indeed in religion, when the work of God is become your natural and beloved employment, your meat and drink, your work and wages : when your tongue and hearts naturally run on God, as others on and of the world. Much of that may be attained by constant care and prayer. Brethren, let God's work be done by you, not by-the-bye, but as your greatest business. Seek first the kingdom of God ; and so, whatsoever you do, you may be able to give that account of yourselves that our Saviour did when they inquired of him, That you are about your Father's business.

Counsel VI. *Confine not religion to your knees, to carry on an even progress of holiness through your whole course.* Brethren, it is the disgrace of religion that Christians are so unlike themselves, unless it be when they are in holy duties. This

wounds religion to the quick, when it shall be said of professors. These men indeed will pray like angels, but, for aught we can see, they are as peevish and touchy as any other men, and they are as hard in their dealings, and make as little conscience of their words as others do. Beloved, do not think religion lies only, or chiefly, in praying, hearing, or reading ; lor you must be throughout religious. Sirs, bring forth your religion out of your closets into your ordinary course ; let there not be a life of holiness on the outside, but let holiness be woven into the whole of your conversations. Plerein consists the excellency and difficulty of religion ; when you have the baits of intemperance before you, then to hold the reins hard, and deny your flesh ; when you have provocation before you, then to bite in your passions, and bridle the unruly member ; when you have dealings with others, then to proceed by that golden rule of equity and charity, to do unto others, as (your consciences tell you) you would have them to do, in the like case, to you ; when you are called upon by your several relations, then to behave yourselves with that tenderness and love, with that reverence and obedience, with that courtesy, condescension, and kindness, that become you in your various capacities. In this, I say, lies the excellence of religion.

Counsel VII. *Ever walk with your end in your eye.* It is true, according to the usual similitude, the traveller thinks not of his journey's end every step, nor needs he ; yet there is no traveller but thinks of it at his setting out. Brethren, there is nothing hinders but that, with prayer and watchfulness, you might come to this, in every solemn action, to mind God as your chief end. Impose this on yourselves as your daily rule to walk by, never to lie down but with these thoughts : " Well, I will make use of my bed as an ordinance of God, for my natural refreshment, that a servant of his may be fitted for his work." Never to rise up but with these thoughts : " I will set forth this day in the name of the

Lord, and make it my business this day throughout to please him.” Never to set about our callings, but in the entrance think thus, “ I will set about my employment in obedience to God, because it is his will I should walk with him in my place and station.” Never to sit down at your tables, but tliinking, “ I will now eat and drink, not merely to feed my body, but to cherish a servant of Christ Jesus, that he may have strength for his service.” Charge this upon yourselves, and examine in the evening how you have minded it, and check yourselves wherein you come short : once learn this, and you are come to something, and shall have the undoubted evidence of your sincerity, and shall know the experience of that blessed mystery of walking with God.

Counsel VIII. *Be and do more than ordinary in your families and closets, now, in the defects of more public ordinances.*

1. *In your closets.* See that your consciences be able to bear you witness, that, under God’s extraordinary providences, you do more than ever : in answer thereto, it may be you prayed twice in the day ; therefore why should you not, at such a time as this is, make one visit more than ordinary to heaven, daily to represent before God the calamities of his church ? Thus be sure of, that somewhat more than heretofore must now be done ; else God will look upon himself as intolerably slighted, and upon his church as most unnaturally neglected, if we do not now be more earnest. Be more than ever in self-examination ; God expects that, when he is trying us, we should be much in the trial of ourselves. And here let me put it to your consciences ; How are your rules for daily examination looked after ? Do you try yourselves by them from day to day ? Ah, wretched negligence ! What ! have you given your approbation, and passed your promise, and yet even in such a day as this so much forget your duty ? God expects it of you, that, now you see him angry, you should, with more zealous fear, and tender circumspection, and holy

watchfulness and self-denial, walk before him ; else you will greatly increase his indignation, when he sees that you slight his anger.

2. *In your families.* Christians, now the Lord calls aloud upon you to set your houses in order. O see what is amiss in them, and strive to cast out that which may be a provocation ! Three things I advise you, with reference to your families :

1<sup>st</sup>, That you set up the solemn exercise of catechising weekly among them. Methinks I would not question but that, in every godly family, there is a care of the catechism ; but when governors do only impose it in general upon their famiKes, and occasionally take an account, I find but little progress is made ; and therefore I beseech you to make it a solemn standing, and constant exercise, and to expect of your children and servants, as due an account weekly, of what they have learned of the principles of religion, as of any business of your own. O, the incredible benefit that would speedily come of this, if I could but persuade and prevail with my hearers in so small a request as this !

2d, That you be often inquiring into their spiritual states. Follow them close, and let them have no quiet till you see they seriously mind and seek spiritual things. Put them upon secret prayer. Provide helps for them till they are able to go without them. Show them often the necessity of regeneration and conversion, and the nature thereof. Put them in mind of their fearful misery and unregenerate state. Beloved, it is too sadly evident, that as the ordinances are now somewhere managed, there is little conversion-work like to be done. O you governors of families ! do but your duty in your several places, and I doubt not but many souls will soon be born to Christ, even in such a day as this.

3d, Call them to an account for their proficiency by every opportunity. If there be but a sermon or a chapter

read, let them give some account of it : thus our Saviour, when the disciples (his family) were in private, was asking them whether they did understand and profit by what they heard in public.

Counsel IX. *Be not discouraged by the present difficulties of religion, but rather rejoice in the opportunity to show your love and loyalty to your Lord.* Do not think God hath dealt hardly with you, now your religion is like to cost you something, and presently think of shrinking and drawing back to preserve your safety. If you love the Lord Jesus, you should rejoice and be exceeding glad in the opportunity to show it. Brethren, what hath your religion cost you hitherto ? “ Then, for shame, suffer not your shrinking and withdrawing to tell the world you have not love enough for Christ to engage you to run any hazard for him. Do you indeed love the Lord ? O then now rejoice and be exceeding glad ; for never had you such an opportunity in all your lives to show your love as now, for never were you called to venture so for him and his service as now you are. Now resolve that, if religion will make you vile, you will yet be more vile, and let your zeal and resolution for God be increased and heightened by the opportunity.

## SACRAMENT CORDIALS FOR THE CONVERTED.

NOW DEARLY BELOVED BRETHERN,

THIS holy sacrament is appointed as a sealing ordinance between Christ and you. The covenants are made ; the terms are agreed to on both sides ; God is willing to be yours to all intents and purposes, your refuge, your rest, and your guide. While Christ has it, you shall never want ; and what God is to him, that he, in your order, will be to

you.

You again, through grace, are willing to be his : his in his own way, and on his own terms ; willing to serve him ; willing to be betrothed to him, and to be commanded by him, to use his remedies, to follow his counsels, and to acquiesce in him as your blessedness : thus all are agreed ; the articles are drawn ; the covenants both on God's part and yours, are ready written ; and here you may come to put all past controversy, and mutually to sell and subscribe. O happy and blessed meeting ! Christians, do not forget your errand ; remember where you are, and what you are come for ; and know that you are upon the most solemn transaction that ever passed between the Creator and the creature. It is God's admirable condescension that he will be united to us, and enter into bonds to us, to bless us and reward us ; and because our faith is weak, he hath brought his surety with him, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is a surety on his part, as well as ours, to undertake for his fulfilling his promises. And he hath brought the visible signs and pledges by which all shall be firmly passed and ratified before your eyes. This is the new testament in my blood, written in my blood, ratified in my blood. O, sirs, this is that which God doth here reach forth unto you with his own hand this day ! the new testament in Christ's blood ! Christians, prepare your ears, and rouse up your faith, and now believe and hear some of the blessed articles of that covenant which God doth here sign and seal to you. I shall mention only nine, which I advise you to lay next your hearts, while you have a day to live, and you shall find the virtue of these cordials strong and operative in all conditions.

Art. I. *That he will fulfil to you the place of all relations.* I will be a father to you, you shall be my sons and daughters. Whatever children may expect from a father, that you may look for from me. I will find you meat, be not thoughtful, I know that you have need of all these things. You shall be



clothed out of my wardrobe, and wear my livery : and when you have need of correction, I will remember to do it in mercy ? and you shall find, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord your God chasteneth you.

I will be a Husband to you, and will betroth you to me for ever. You shall not need to fear, your Maker is so : I will give you my choice love, I will give you my heart.

I will be a Lord and Sovereign to you : the Lord is your Judge, the Lord is your Lawgiver, the Lord is your King. Fear not the unrighteousness of men : I will judge your cause, I will defend your rights ; you shall not stand or fall at man's bar ; you shall not be cast at their votes : let them curse, I will bless ; let them condemn, I will justify. Who shall accuse when I shall acquit ? Who shall lay any thing to your charge, when I do discharge you ? When you come upon trial for your life, to have your eternal state decided, you shall see your friend, your Father, on the bench ; and you shall surely stand in judgment, and be found at the right hand, among the sheep, and hear the King say. Come ye blessed.

I will be a Shepherd to you : fear no evil, for I am with you. You shall not want, for I will feed you. You shall not wander to be lost, for I will restore you. I will cause you to lie down in green pastures, and lead you beside the still waters. If my officers be careless, I will do it myself. As for you, O my flock, thus saith the Lord God, I will judge between cattle and cattle : I will feed my flock, saith the Lord God, and cause them to lie down ; I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and bind up that which was broken, and strengthen that which is sick. But I will destroy the fat and the strong, and will feed them with judgment.

I will be a Physician to you, I will heal your backslidings, and cure all your diseases ; fear not ; never did soul miscarry that left itself in my hands, and would but follow my prescription.

Well, this is one of the articles that God here sealeth to, that he will be to you in the place of all relations. Silence, thou quarrelling unbelief. Methinks I hear thy whispers, that this is too good to be true ; that it were presumption in us to count upon all this. What ! shall they, that must say to corruption. Thou art my father, be able to say to the incorruptible God, Thou art my Father ? Shall they, that must say to the worm, thou art my mother and my sister, be able to say to the angels of light, ye are my fellow-servants, and to the King of glory, thou art my brother and my kinsman ? Shall Majesty espouse himself to misery, and the worms' meat be married to immortality and life ? How can these things be ?

Nay, but O heart of unbelief, what art thou that repliest against God ? Dost thou, under a sly pretence of humility, argue with thy Maker, and call veracity into doubt ? Is not this his word, his promise, his covenant ? and is there not his seal ? Why then dost thou doubt, O thou of little faith ?

Art. II. *That he will entitle you to all the divine perfections :* " I will be a God to thee." God gives away himself, and he gives his Son to you : " I will give thee for a covenant of the people." This is the church's triumph, " Unto us a Son is given." And he gives his Spirit to you : " He shall give you another Comforter." And believers acknowledge the receipt : " We have received the Spirit which is of God." Thus you see all the persons of the Godhead are made over to you, and so are all the perfections of the Godhead : and so the covenant runs, " I am the Almighty God, or the all-sufficient God ; walk before me and be upright." These are the terms between God and a believer : " Be thou upright before me, and I will be all-sufficient to thee." The all-sufficiency of God is the comprehension of all his perfections. Truth without power, or power without wisdom--both without goodness, would not be ail-sufficiency. All-sufficiency takes in all that is in God, (if

we may speak of God's most simple essence according to the shallow reach of our present capacity) yea, it comprehends infinitely more than can be said or thought. Why now, this is the covenant of grace which God establishes with you this day, that he will be a God all-sufficient to you.

Christians, rouse up your faith, now appropriate and apply the promises, now believe strongly and steadfastly ; and believing will fill you with joy unspeakable and full of glory. I do not wonder if your faith be put to it, in so great and high a mystery, to draw nigh to infinite Majesty, and consideringly and without resistance to say thou art mine, and all that thou hast"—this is no easy thing. But thou mayest not dare to doubt it. Canst thou question him who is the truth ? Can the strength of Israel lie, or in his word deceive thee ? But the soul is ready to reply, O ! the thing is too high and great for me to presume and believe ! and is ready, with Peter astonished, to cry out, "Depart, Lord, for I am a sinful man." But why doth thy hand tremble, and thy heart fail thee, and thy feet, with Peter's, when walking on the water, begin to sink ? What dost thou halt at ? Is it at the truth of the promises ? No, saith he, trembling soul, but sure so much can never belong to me so sinful ; I am afraid it is not mine. Why, what saith the promise ? Only be upright. What, though thou hast a hundred failings, yet thy heart is upright ; the bent of thy heart is mainly for God and holiness ; thou makest conscience of all sin, little as well as great, secret as well as open, and dost not deliberately allow thyself in any. Thou dost, in the settled frame of thy heart, prefer the pleasing of God, and value his favour and fellowship, above all worldly good, therefore thou art upright : these marks are infallible. What ! dost thou object thy failings ? Art thou under a covenant of works ? Do ye think God now stands upon perfection ? The covenant is plain : God contendeth for uprightness, and God hath wrought in thee that condition that he

requires of thee. What can be plainer ? Wilt thou suffer the devil and unbelief to catch the blessing ; out of thy hand, when God tells thee it is thine ? Wilt thou be against thyself, and refuse thine own peace, when God is come to seal thee up to the day of redemption ? This is that which the Lord here seals to thee, that he will be a God all-sufficient to thee. O, believe and be thankful, and rejoice in thy own blessedness ! O happy, thrice happy souls, to whom the living God thus signeth and sealeth, and assigns over all his infinite perfections as their everlasting possession !

Art. III. *That he will discharge you from all your debts.* This is the covenant ; " I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Though your sin be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." Believest thou this ? Come near, beloved Christian, approach believingly, and here thou shalt see the Lord obliterating all thy debts, taking away the hand-writing that is against thee, declaring that he hath received a ransom, and he is satisfied, contented, and paid. O happy man, that shalt leave all thy sins behind thee ! Why, this is the very thing the faithful God doth here seal unto thee. Thy pardon is written in his most sacred blood, which is here shed for the remission of sins ; so that thou mayest triumph with the Apostle, " Who is he that condemneth ? It is Christ that died."

Art. IV. *That he will save you from all your enemies.* Not from the combat, but from the conquest : the victory shall be sure, so far as God is engaged. So the covenant runs in its first discovery, that the seed of the woman shall break the serpent's head, though he should bruise his heel. By the seed of the woman understand not Christ only ; but all believers. By the serpent, understand not Satan only ; but all his party, the ungodly persecuting world, which are his children ; and all our tyrannical lusts, which are his works. By his bruising our heel, understand his molesting and

wounding us, but not mortally. By our breaking his head, understand the total and final victory which we shall most certainly obtain over him and his party at last. Christians, what should we fear ? Death ! the covenant here sealed makes over death as a legacy to you ; and behold it brings the head of your conquered enemy in a chnrger. Death is yours ; O blessed and most grateful present ! The covenant assures you God will bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The world ! be of good cheer, Christ hath overcome the world. Hell ! there is no condemnation for them that are in Christ Jesus. Sin ! this is indeed to be dreaded, but with a watchful and cautious fear, not with a fainting, discouraging fear. Sin shall not have dominion over you.

Christians, here is support now for your faith--What ! do all these holy promises nothing move you, or carry little savour or relish with them ? What ! shall the Almighty God give it to thee, under his own hand, that thou art a freeman, and thou makest little account of it ? Shall he give thee thy protection, and thou lay it by as a useless paper that signifieth little ? O sirs ! when your hearts are ready to faint, because of the sons of Anak, that be in the way ; when you see the king of terrors levelling at you, and a wicked world armed with rage against you, and full of malice, and the thieves and conspirators in thy bosom watching their opportunity to betray all to them ; yet let not this discourage you. These were enough indeed to make a considering man's heart to melt and die within him : but that covenant of grace yields such ample relief against all ! O be ever mindful of the covenant ! Remember what hath passed this day between the living God and your souls. Watch, O Christian, and stand fast ! acquit thee like a man. The conquest is sure. Who would not fight with courage that hath assurance of the victory ?

Art. V. *That he will befriend you in all conditions.* He will be a fast friend to you in every change, and turn all things to your good : and, when you are ready to say unbelievably,

with Jacob, “ All these things are against me.” “ If he brings you into the wilderness, there he will speak comfortably unto you. In the fire and the water he will be with you. He will be a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress ; a refuge from the storm, and a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible one is as a storm against the wall.”

Beloved, here the Lord is come to seal all these promises to you. O go home and bless yourselves in the sweet security of your state ! God hath promised you, that whatever condition you be in, you shall have succour and support from him, and enjoy his presence with you, and see his finger, in all your troubles, sweetly turning all for the best. Go away and live like believers ; be not afraid of sufferings, but show that you believe what God hath promised, that affliction shall not hurt you. The next time any trouble comes upon you, remember what a promise God hath passed upon you this day, and wait on him believingly for the happy issue and event of every trial that shall befall you.

Art. VI. That he will take upon him the care of all your concerns. “ You must be careful in nothing. He careth for you : take no thought what ye shall eat or drink, neither be of doubtful mind ; but rather seek ye the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you.” Come ye to this holy ordinance in any distress or trouble : methinks you should go from it as Hannah, and your countenance be no more sad : “ God shall number your hairs, and take care that nothing be lost. He will take care of your names, and bring forth your righteousness as the light. He will take care of your substance, he will give meat to them that fear him, and be ever mindful of his covenant : of your seed, for he will be a God to them, and will entail the blessing on them.” He commands that your widows, and fatherless children should be left on him. He is, by covenant, to look after their concerns : you need not be solicitous ; he is tender of you,

when he seems most to neglect you ; as Moses' sister, that was secretly watching behind the bush, and wishingly looking on, to see what was done to the child ; though, to the finders, it seemed exposed to famine and death in the flags.

Art. VII. *That he will give you, or be himself to you, instead of all comfort.* “ He will be a sun and a shield, and give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.” O ! the treasure that is in these words, “ I am thy shield and exceeding great reward. I will undertake both for thy protection and provision : when evil assails thee, I will be a shield to thee ; when any good is wanting, I will be a supply ; thou shalt have children, or I will be better to thee than ten children ; thou shalt have riches, or I will be thy store ; thou shalt have friends, if best for thee, or else I will be thy comforter in thy solitude, thy counsellor in thy distress ; my secrets, my ears, and my doors, shall be ever open to thee. He shall receive a hundred fold in this time : though he have not the things themselves, yet he shall have all these, and more than all in me ; I will be house, friend, and father to him, all in one.” If you should have a hundred candles burning in the room, and should put out every one, and open the window, and let in the sun, this would be better than the hundred lights that were put out ; so here, though thou shouldst be called on to forsake all, it will be but as letting the cistern run, and opening the fountain.

Art. VIII. *That he will maintain you all your days in his service.* “ He will be your guide even unto death.” Christian, whilst thou hast a day to live, God will stand by thee : he “ will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow you all the days of your lives, and the Lord will never turn away from you to do you good.” O happy covenant that the Lord sealeth to you !

Art. IX. That when you come of age, he will give the

kingdom to you. God saith to the believer here, thine is the kingdom ; whatever is promised in the covenant is sealed in the sacrament. It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. I appoint unto you a kingdom. Mark the promise pregnant with a kingdom ; it is no less than a crown, a kingdom, that is here delivered to you. A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive to himself a kingdom, and to return : this is the business you are come hither for, to receive to yourselves a kingdom, and so to return. O ! methinks, you should forget the ground you go upon as you are going home, to think what you have received here : methinks, you should go forth as Haman from the banquet, joyful and with a glad heart. Sirs, do you know what you are doing ? Why, the Lord doth by these signs give you the kingdom, as a man, by delivering to you a turf or a key, gives possession of a house or land. Brethren, have you ever read of the kingdom of joy, of the crown of life, of the robes of righteousness, of the throne of glory ? Why all these God here makes over to you. I tell you, Sirs, these are not big words, nor cunningly devised fables ; God Almighty is here come to certify you of the reality of his promises : as sure as you now sit on your seats, you shall shortly sit on your thrones : as sure as you are now clothed with flesh, so surely shall you be clothed with glory. Are you sure you are now on earth ? So surely shall you be shortly in heaven : the Lord intendeth you but for a very little while in this lower region ; you must dwell above : where Christ is, there must you be also ; as sure as you now see a crucified Christ, so surely shall you see a glorified Christ. The Lord Jesus doth anticipate his sentence here, and calls to you his guests. Come, ye blessed, inherit the kingdom ; take the writings, hold the seals, here are the conveyances of the kingdom ; the donation is sure and full, unalterable, irrevocable.

Christians, do you believe ? If you do, methinks, you should be ravished ; methinks, you should be filled with joy

unspeakable, and full of glory. But do you stagger at the promise through unbelief? Do you say, O it is too much and too great! Why, how can this be? What! too great for God to make good? Thou darest not think so. But it is too great for me to count upon. Why, but man, dost thou not bear upon thee the mark of the Lord Jesus? Whose image and superscription is this? Doth not your very heart prize Christ above all the world? Hast thou not made a deliberate choice of him for thy head and husband? Hast thou not entered into a solemn contract with him, to be his for all times and conditions, and to love, honour, and obey him, before all others, to thy death? And doth not thy heart stand to all its choice? Hast thou not taken him, with his yoke and with his cross? And dost thou not, in thy practice, first seek the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof? And hast thou not chosen the way of the kingdom? Art thou not in love with holiness, and desirest grace more than gold? Dost thou not prefer a holy spiritual life, before all the grandeur of the world, and the pleasures of the flesh? And all this, not only for a fit, or flash, but in the settled frame and disposition of thy heart? Surely thou must wrong God and thyself, if thou deniest it to be thus with thee. Why, these are the marks of the Lord Jesus upon thee, the sure marks. Fear not, these cannot deceive thee; they evidence that thou art born of God, that thou art a son, and so an heir, and therefore may lay claim to the inheritance.

Come, then, beloved Christian, be of good comfort, why shouldest thou doubt? Thou hast the mark of the sheep, and therefore thy portion shall be at the right hand, and thy sentence among the blessed. Well, then, receive this holy sacrament as the pledge of all this. Go home and look over all these blessed promises, and count them thine. Do not read them (as too often heretofore) as if they did not concern thee. Remember what God hath here promised under hand and seal to thee, and let not all be left

behind thee, when thou goest hence, but let the remembrance, the sweet fruit of them, abide upon thee whilst thou hast a day to live. Never forget what the Lord hath here spoken to thy soul: make more of the promises than ever in thy life before; bless thyself in them; remember how the Lord delivered thee the promises; how he sealed to thee several articles; how he sprinkled the blood upon the book of the covenant, and gave it thee, and said, this is the new testament in my blood. O! live henceforth a life of joy and faith, as a man that is elevated above the world; do not live at the old dull and slothful rate; carry it as a believer; and, in a word, walk as one that doth indeed take all for truth that the Lord Jesus hath spoken to thee this day. Let that of the Apostle be a close to all—"Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness, both of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God!"

## CASES OF CONSCIENCE.

### FOUR

## PRACTICAL CASES OF CONSCIENCE

### SATISFACTORILY RESOLVED.

### CASE I.

### THE SINGULAR DUTIES OF CHRISTIANS.

*A Case of Conscience on MATTHEW v. 47.*

“What do ye more than others?”

Q. I. WHEREIN should Christians be singular in their obedience? or what may and must they do more than others?

A. Take the answer of these sixteen rules containing the character and compass of a Christian.

Rule I. *Heartily to love them that slight you, and wish and seek the good, of those that hate you and seek to hurt you.* This is the very thing urged in the text. “If you salute your brethren only, and love them that love you, do not even the publicans the same?” To love them that do respect and value us, is what every one can do; but to love them that think meanly of us and have prejudice and hard thoughts against us, and to speak well of them that speak evil of us, as the sweet-spirited Calvin, “let Luther call me dog or devil, I will say of him, nevertheless, he is a precious servant of Christ Jesus:” this is to do more than others. Thus the martyr Cranmer, of whom it was a proverb, “Do the Bishop of Canterbury a displeasure, and you shall ever have him your friend.” Thus that holy man, in his much to be lamented parting words, “I had never any greater pleasure, in all my life, than to forget and to forgive injuries, and to show kindness to them that sought evil to me.” Study to keep up good thoughts of those who have offended and disobliged you, and slighted you, and (if the cause will bear it), speak nothing but good of them, and think what kindness you may show them. Pray for them; wish well for them; so shall you be the children of your Father which is in heaven.

Rule II. To swim against the stream of the multitude. The dead fish will swim with, but the living against, the stream. Many will turn Jews when their interest will carry it in the world; when religion is in fashion, every one will be in it: but to bear head against the current of the times, and to be for strict godliness in all your ways, when the stream

runs quite against it, to bear it down, and to resolve, as David did, to be yet more vile, this is to be and to do more than others. The Samaritans will need be Jews when Alexander favours and helps them; but when Antiochus bloodily rages against them, (as in the time of the Maccabees), then they will be none of the kin, but pretend themselves to be of another stock (which by the way, was the reason of the deadly hatred afterwards between the Jews and them): but to be singular in your good choice and resolutions, with Joshua, though all should vote against you with one consent; and, with Noah, to be perfect in our generations, when ever so adulterous, and to walk with God when all flesh have corrupted their way and tread a contrary course; this is to do more than others. Thus, the three children, or rather three champions, who would not fear the scorn of the multitude, nor the frowns of the great ones, nor the charge of singularity, but when all the princes, governors, captains, counsellors, sheriffs, and all the people, nations, and languages, fell down and worshipped, stood by themselves, and would not sinfully comply.

Rule III. *To take more care of that which is most out of sight.* A Christian’s eye is most on the things least seen: first upon his heart; herein doth he exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees, whose great care was to keep all fair and clean that came to view, but looked no farther. Make great conscience of your carriage in secret, and let your main guard be upon your hearts, and this will be more than others reach to. This was Paul’s care, to keep his conscience clean and undefiled, and Job’s care, that though all the world did reproach him, he might not put a reproach in the mouth of his conscience, and David’s care, that his heart might be clean. 2. On his hope. Others look to the things seen, things in hand; but the true believer eyes his hopes, walks by faith, not by sight, and lives a quite different life from any other in the world besides; as living upon the hopes of heaven doth differ from living on the pleasures,

profits, and honours of the world.

Rule IV. *To be merciful to others' failings, and very severe to our own.* The noble Roman, Cato, could more easily forgive any than himself. To aggravate our own evils, and to have an excuse ready for our brother's, and to censure ourselves freely, and to come with the mantle behind us to cover our brother ; this is to do more than others. The hypocrite is a censor abroad ; he is like the eye that can see any thing, but himself ; he can discern a mote in his brother's eye, but not a beam in his own. The servant of God rebukes others with meekness : but he falls out easily and bitterly with himself.

Rule V. *To suffer rather than to sin.* This was Moses' choice : but the hypocrite's is quite contrary ; he chooseth iniquity rather than affliction. To go so far with Christ as our way lies together, is to do no more than an unsound professor may reach to : the trial is, when Christ's interest and ours do cross, and we must either neglect our duty, or our safety and advantage. The famous martyr under Julian, would not give one halfpenny towards the building of the idol's temple, though he was offered his life by the emperor on these terms. The godly high-priest, Eleazer, when the nobles persuaded him to eat other meat under colour of swine's flesh, and they would persuade king Antiochus that he had eaten swine's flesh, would die rather than stain his profession with the appearance of evil. When a man shall be exposed to misery, and have a door of deliverance open, if he will but sin, and yet he will not accept of it, as those worthies in Paul's martyrology ; this is to do more than others.

Rule VI. *To rejoice in losses for Christ, and glory in the cross.* When others are discouraged at the news of hardships, as that forward and seemingly resolved disciple ; or shall be offended as soon as the sun of persecution is up ; when we shall take pleasure in infirmities, and tribulations, and rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer shame for the

name of Christ ; this is to do more than others. When the servants of God shall not only patiently and triumphantly undergo the crosses that wound the heart of others, and shall shake off the viper without receiving any hurt ; when Paul and Silas shall sing in the stocks, and the resolved martyrs shall embrace the fagots and kiss the stake ; when the valiant pilot shall say of his prison, " In the judgment of the world we are in hell, but I find in it the sweet consolation of heaven ;" and the holy Bradford, " My prison is sweeter to me than any parlour, than any pleasure I have had all my life ;" this is indeed to exceed others.

Rule VII. *To be good when we shall be evil spoken of for our labour.* A Pharisee will do those duties that gain applause of men : but, to take up with despised duties, disgraceful duties, and, with David, to be religious when it shall render him vile ; this is to do more than others. The philosopher could say, " It is noble indeed for a man to do well, when he knows he shall bear ill for it." To take up religion when every one throws it off ; to stand up alone, with Luther, for the truth, when the whole world is gone wandering after the whore ; to have his hand against every man, and to be for Christ, with Athanasius, against the whole universe ; this is indeed to do some singular thing.

Rule VIII. *To strike in with God's interest when it is falling.* To join ourselves with the Lord's people when it is the weakest ; to espouse their interest, with Moses, when they were in deep affliction. To own ourselves to be some of them undauntedly, when this way is everywhere spoken against, this is to tread antipodes to the course of this world.

Rule IX. *To be most cruel to the sin that is naturally most dear.* The hypocrite hides his sweet morsel under his tongue ; he spares, as it were, the fattest of the cattle ; he saith, the Lord pardon his servant concerning this thing ; but when a man shall off with his right hand, out with his right eye, serve his Absalom as Joab did when he took three darts and

thrust through his heart, this is to do more than others. The sincere Christian is most angry with the sin of his temper ; against this he aims the arrows of all his prayer. He keeps him from his iniquity ; he drives the whole herd of sin before him ; but especially he shoots at, and singles out this, to run it down.

Rule X. *To live upon the divine promises, when others live upon their possessions.* Others are all for what is in hand ; with them words are but wind ; they cannot live upon them ; the promises are to them a barren heath, or dry breasts. But, when we make the promises our heritage, the staff of our life, the life of our hearts ; when the promises are the cordial we run to in all our fainting ; and, while others hope in their wealth, our hope is in the word ; this is to do more than others.

Rule XI. *To love that best, and choose it soonest that doth cross the flesh most.* The godly man's rule is, to take the self-denial side, so he be sure it be safe. When others study to please themselves, he to curb himself. The life of others is a flesh-pleasing, his a self-denying life. Others' joy is when they can gratify themselves ; his, when he can get the victory over himself.

Rule XII. *To be most zealous in that wherein self is least concerned.* Paul is meek as a lamb under personal injuries, but how is his spirit stirred when God is dishonoured ! A man of understanding is of a cool spirit, that is, in his own concern ; but Moses the meek waxes hot with indignation at the sight of the calf. To be hot and forward in those duties where the interest of the flesh is not concerned, is to do more than a Jehu.

Rule XIII. *To make a true conscience of the least sin, but most conscience of the greatest.* In one of these will the hypocrite be found tardy. It may be he will fly from open sins, and startle at gross staring sins, but of little sins he makes little conscience ; these he allows of, and connives at. Or else he

will be very tender of little things ; scruple the picking of ears of corn on the Sabbath-day, or the curing of the sick, and strain at the gnat, when he will in other things swallow a camel, and devour widows' houses. The sincere will indulge no sin ; grieves for, groans under, cries out feelingly against his very infirmities, but most dreads what God hates.

Rule XIV. *To allow yourselves in the neglect of no duty, but to reserve your zeal for the duties of most weight.* To tithe mint and cummin, and neglect judgment, mercy, and faith ; to be zealous for human ceremonies and men's traditions, and omit the weightier matters of the law, is the right Pharisee's guise. To eye both the tables ; to join sweetly together morality and piety ; to be punctual with men, but not careless with God ; to give Caesar the things that are Caesar's, but first to give to God the things that are God's ; this is to do more than others. The sincere Christian has respect to all God's commandments ; walks in all his statutes : he is throughout with God, but be most zealous in these things that lie next the heart of religion.

Rule XV. *To love your reprovers.* Herein David doth more than Ahab. See their contrary frames, I Kings xxii. 8, Psalm cxli. 5.

Rule XVI. *To subject all your worldly interest to your Maker's glory, and perform holy duties with holy ends ; and, while others do their best actions with carnal aims, you must do your common and civil actions with heavenly aims.*

*Q. How may we know whether we are, and do, more than others that are unsound ?*

I shall answer this question by propounding eight questions to you, beseeching you to retire to the most solemn and strict examination, and make conscience give a clear answer to these few interrogatories ; and that will resolve the case.



*Q. I. When others pick and choose, have you respect to all God's commandments ?* The hypocrite may have great respect to the comforts, but he hath little to the commands of religion : he is much for the privileges and promises, little for the precepts and duties : he is partial in the law ; he will take but here and there, where he likes ; and, where God commands, will sever his interest, or at least, will not press too hard upon the flesh. The sound Christian sets all God's commands before him ; he eyes all his copy, and heartily designs and studies a throughout conformity : he has no contrived haunts ; nor doth he halt between the Lord and Baal, nor serve two masters ; he doth not fear the Lord, and serve other gods, nor divide his service between God and mammon, but is all for uniformity, and entirely devoted to God's service and fear alone. He hath a good conscience, willing in all things to live honestly, and doth truly, though not perfectly, forsake all his sins, and keep all God's statutes that are known to him. Let me therefore ask you two questions : (1.) When others divide the tables, do you sweetly conjoin them in your practice ? The hypocrite may be just and square towards men ; but follow him to his family or closet, you shall find but little of God ; his family is neglected, his soul is neglected. Or, it may be, he is a forward first-table man, but you shall find him tardy in the second. He will make many and long prayers, yet make no conscience of devouring widows' houses ! He is a great pretender of piety, but meanwhile neglects judgment and mercy. The sincere joins altogether. He is so far careful of justice with men, that meanwhile he will not neglect the first and great part of justice, viz. to give God his due. He doth justice, he loves mercy, but withal walks humbly with God. He walketh soberly with respect to himself, righteously towards his neighbour, and godly towards his Maker. He is not one of those that are good only on their knees, but you shall find him everywhere conscientious ; you shall have temperance on his table, chastity and

modesty in his behaviour, grace and truth in his words, charity in his deeds, faithfulness in his trust, justice in his dealing. He doth not only seem to be religious, but bridleth his tongue ; he is not only a good Christian, but a good neighbour ; not only a good man, but a good husband, a good master, dutiful child, a diligent and faithful servant, a good subject. In a word, he makes great conscience of discharging the duties of his relations among men. (2.) When others stick in externals, do you look to the spiritual part of every command, and principally mind the inwards and vitals of religion ; do you not only make conscience of performing duties, but do you carefully look to the manner of performing them, and the ends for which you do perform them ? Do you not only make conscience of open, but of secret sins ? Do you abound, above all, in secret duties ? Do you keep a watch upon your hearts, and make conscience not only of the gross acts of sin, but even of sinful thoughts, inclinations, and desires ? and are you grieved even with your infirmities, and the corrupt disposition of your natures, which you cannot help though you would ?

*Q. II. When others have their reserves in closing with Christ, do you give up all to him entirely ?* Have you taken Christ, not hand over head, but deliberately, understandingly, sitting down first and counting the cost ? Have you not secret reserves for your own ease, safety, estate, some esteemed beloved sin ? Have you, upon solemn consideration, accepted Christ as the Lord your righteousness, for all changes of times and conditions ; to run all hazards with him, and to take your lot with him, fall as it will ?

*Q. III. When others are for a little religion by-the-by, do you make religion your business ?* Do you not put off God with the world's leaving, and serve him, when you are at leisure ? Must not God stand by, while the world is first served ? and are not your souls the least of your cares, and put off with

some by-scrap and ends of your time ? Is religion your trade, and your conversation in heaven ? Do you walk with God ? or have you only now and then a turn with him ? When you have ended your prayers, is there an end of your religion till you come to them again ? or do you carry on a design of religion throughout your whole course ? Have you religion woven into the heart and life ? into your discourse, and trades, and tables ? Do you first seek the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof ? Is it the chief care of your lives that God be served and your souls be saved ? And is this the one thing necessary with you, that you chiefly mind, and are most solicitous about ? Do your very hearts say, with David, one thing have I desired of the Lord : that will I seek after, &c.

*Q. IV. When others are for the wages of religion are you for the work ?* Can you say, with David, I have chosen thy precepts ? Do your hearts come off freely in this choice ? Had you rather be holy than otherwise, if it were your choice ? Had you rather be God's servant, and live at his command, than at your own lusts ? Do you count the laws of Christ your heritage, or rather do you count them your bondage ? Do ye choose not only the wages of righteousness, but the ways of righteousness ? Are God's commandments your delight ? and are the sweetest hours of your lives the hours you spend with him ? Do ye ever enjoy yourselves so much as when you most enjoy God ? Is his service the greatest comfort ? and is it meat and drink to do his will, unless when you are not yourselves in the time of temptation or desertion ? Do you make use of holy duties only as men do of physic, when they are ill at ease, when conscience lashes, and afflictions sting, as it were to conjure down the frightful furies, or to pacify God, that he may not hurt you ? or else do you use them as your daily bread, and the very staff of your life and means of your comforts ?

*Q. V. When others are for the cheap and easy religion, are you for*

*self-denial ?* When others are for the religion that will serve them best, are you for that which will serve God best ? When others are all upon the sparing hand, and will spare what may be spared, and study how they may best save charges in going to heaven, are you of princely spirits, to resolve not to serve the Lord with that which will cost nothing ? Is your course of religion such as doth put your flesh to it, and cross and curb its desires ? or do you love to give it what it craves, and suffer it to take its own way ? Have you no enemy you dread so much as self ? Do you pamper and please it, and make provision for it, or do you pray and watch against it, and grieve for its unhappy infirmities in your actions, and had you rather than all the world that this enemy were under your feet ?

*Q. VI. When others are for no more religion than needs must, are you for the height of religion ?* The hypocrite, as one well observes, is very inquisitive what is the lowest pitch a man may have, and go to heaven, and upon his design, if he could find but this, he would look no farther. But the sincere Christian, though satisfied that his state is safe, will rest in no attainments in grace, but reaches forward, and presses on, if it were possible, to attain to the resurrection of the dead. He that doth not “ desire, and design, and endeavour perfection, never yet came up to sincerity.” A true believer desires “ holiness for holiness' sake,” and therefore is set upon “ perfecting holiness.”

Others desire it only for heaven's sake, and therefore are only for so a false notion of much as will bear their charge thither. Others make use of holiness only as a bridge to heaven, and therefore are for no more than will just serve their turn. The true believer hath a holy nature, and therefore holiness is his element and natural employment ; and he must needs desire holiness in its height, because every nature reaches after perfection in its kind. The godly desires not holiness, because it is the way to heaven ; but he loves heaven the better for the holy way that leads to it, and

for the perfect holiness which is there.

Q. VII. *When others are all for the salvation of Christ, are you as truly for sanctification by Christ*

? Do you take Christ as God offers him, with all his offices and benefits, to be both a prince and a Saviour, to give you repentance as well as remission of sins ? Are you desirous of the dominion of Christ, as well as deliverance

*And they have a false notion of heaven itself ; else they might justly desire it, as the end of their present holiness : it being the fruition of*

by Christ ? Do you close with his burden as well as his benefits ? Do you count his laws your liberty ? his government not your bondage, but your privilege ? his service your freedom ? Do you go in Christ's ways as in fetters ? or do you run with enlargement of heart, delight, or real willingness ?

Q. VIII. *When others do make self their end, do you set up God above all, as your highest end ?* The hypocrite doth the same duties with the godly, but with different ends ; he eats for himself, he fasts for himself, and prays with no better than self-ends, and therefore is rejected. Now, it is your great design, in your whole course, to glorify God, and enjoy him. Do you count this your whole business and blessedness ? Do you make other business stoop to this, other interest yield to this ? Do your souls breathe after this, above all “ worldly good,” that Christ may be magnified in you ? Do you count your name and estate as loss in comparison of Christ ? If conscience give a comfortable and clear answer to these questions, go in peace ; blessed are you of the Lord ! God is your friend ! Heaven is your heritage, the promises are your portion. Christ is yours : all is yours ; for he that hath these things shall never be moved.

## CASE II.

*A Case of Conscience on 1 THESS. iv. 1.*

“ Furthermore then, we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.”

Q. WHAT may and must a Christian be and do, that he may please God ?

A. *To your pleasing God, something is necessary as to your persons or estates, and something as to your performances and acts.*

I. *As to your persons or estates*, it is necessary in general that you be in a state of reconciliation with God. If you would walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, you must first be friends with him ; for how can two walk together, except they be agreed ? Get the controversy taken up between God and thee, and then thou shalt, with Levi, walk with God in peace. Labour to get the breach made up, to have the enmity slain, to have divine displeasure removed. Till thy pardon be obtained, and thy peace made, nothing thou canst do will please God ; he will be angry with thy person, and angry with thy prayers. What a sharp message is that to impertinent sinners, Mal. i. 10. God cannot take pleasure in their persons ; “ I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of Hosts,” nor in any of their performances ; “ neither will I accept an offering at your hand.” He professes that his soul had no delight in them, and tells them, they are unto him as a vessel wherein there is no pleasure. It is the modest expression of that vessel into which nature empties itself. Come in, then, and touch the golden sceptre ; yield to mercy ; kiss the son ; resign to Christ ; accept of the peace tendered to you in the word of reconciliation ; and then God will be a friend.

More particularly, that you may be in a state of reconciliation, and so in a capacity of pleasing God, you must follow these directions.

1. *Put off every sin.* It is your iniquity that separates between you and your God. If thou wouldst have God pleased, forsake every sin ; pluck it out ; cast it from thee : if thou regard iniquity in thy heart, God will not hear thee, nor regard thee. If thou art of them that have pleasure in unrighteousness, the Lord hath no pleasure in thee ; he is not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness ; evil shall not dwell with him ; the fools shall not stand in his sight ; he hateth all the workers of iniquity. See that thou abandon every sin that thou knowest ; spare not one Agag, not a right eye, not an Herodias ; for then God will not spare thee : give the darling of thy bosom a bill of divorce ; say to the idol get thee hence. God will not look upon that man that seems pleasant upon any sin. The jealous God will not endure to see thee embracing any sin with delight ; he will not bear it, to see thee smile upon any sin ; he holds thee a traitor to his crown, if thou willingly harbourest his enemy. Though thou be very diligent in God's service, and presentest him with multitudes of sacrifices and many prayers, he will be pleased with nothing, but hide his face and stop his ears, while thou keepest thine iniquities in thy hands. God will not amicably treat with them that will not put away the evil of their doings. O look into thine hands, thy heart, and into thy house, into thy shop, thy trade, thy calling, and see if there be any way of wickedness that thou art found in. Thou canst not have peace with God, nor he pleasure in thee, till this be removed : put off, therefore, the old man, with his deeds.

2. *Put on the Lord Jesus Christ.*

First, *The red robe of his righteousness for justification.* The Lord will never give thee a good look, nor a good word, but in Christ : he is a revenging, a consuming fire out of Christ ; but get on his robes, and he will be well pleased. Enoch

had this testimony, that he pleased God ; but Christ had much more, that God was well pleased with sinners in and for him. Away with these rags and with these fig-leaves : how can the righteous soul of God but abhor you, whilst in the filthy clothes of your own righteousness ? Dare not to come unto God but with Christ in your arms ; approach him not but in the garment of your elder brother, lest you carry away the curse. Joshua's filthy garments must be put off, and Christ's raiments put on, else there is no standing before the bright and burning eyes of infinite holiness. Put on the Lord Jesus in believing ; that is, accept of him in all his offices, with all his inconveniences, and deliver up thyself to him, and this will entitle thee to his merits and righteousness : without this nothing will avail. If thy head were waters, and thine eyes a fountain of tears ; if thou shouldst wear thy tongue to the root with praying ; if thou shouldst weep an ocean, and wash thyself in it, all could not get out one spot : nothing can be accepted while thou art out of Christ ; and therefore, in the first place, apply thyself to him. God will accept no gift but of his altar.

Secondly, *The white robe of his grace of sanctification.* Thou, that art in the flesh, (that is, unrenewed, unsanctified), "canst not please God." Never think to make up the matter by a little "mending and reforming" particular acts : man, thy heart must be renewed ; thy state must be clean altered, or God cannot be pleased. The tree must be made good, the fountain must be healed, or else the stream will be salt, and the fruit sour. If Christ be once formed in thee, that is his image, in his grace, God will love thee. Likeness is the ground of love : similitude and suitableness of nature are the loadstones of affection, God cannot but love his own likeness. Wouldst thou have his favour ? wouldst thou be his delight ? then conform to his pleasure, study to be like him, purify thyself as he is pure, "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness ;" he desireth "truth in the inward parts," and takes infinite complacence

in the graces of his people. These are the spikenard, the spices, the bed of lilies, the sweet ointments, that Christ is so taken with : these are the cinnamon and the tree of frankincense, the calamus and caraphire, the myrrh and aloes, the chains of the neck, and the precious pearls, that he is so ravished withal, and doth so superlatively commend. This is the raiment of needle-work, and gold of Ophir, wherein the queen is presented to her royal husband. Therefore, “ as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put ye on bowels of mercy, kindness.” “ Put off all these, anger, wrath, malice, filthy communication ; and put ye on the new man.” Particularly let me commend to you some special graces, which God doth manifest him to be wonderfully pleased withal : as ever you would please God, get on these :

1st, *Be clothed with humility.* This is a garment which must be put on, or else you cannot be accepted or saved. Here is the dress you must come to God in : he must be “ served in humility of mind.” You must humble yourselves to walk with him. Humility is a plain, yet comely garment. This grace doth eminently honour God, and therefore God doth put a peculiar honour upon, and manifest a most special delight in this. Of all the men in the world, this is the man that God will look unto ; even him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, that trembles at his word. Though he be a high and lofty one, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, (whence the trembling soul is ready to conclude, that surely such a fearful Majesty cannot but despise him, such a sin-hating purity cannot but abhor him), yet he will lay aside his Majesty, and bear with man’s impurity, and condescend to most familiar and constant communion and habitation with his poor dust, when contrite at his feet, and prostrate in humility. If thou wouldst be accepted of God, come, as Benhadad’s servants to the king of Israel, with a rope about thy neck, and ashes on thy head. Think meanly of thyself, and God will honour thee. Put thyself in the

lowest room, and God will set thee higher ; be little in thine own eyes, and thou shalt be high in his. A proud heart and a proud look are, with God, the first-born of abomination. As ever thou wouldst have God well pleased with thee, be thoroughly displeased with thyself : if thou dost thoroughly loathe thyself, God will love thee ; if thou abhorrest thyself, God will delight in thee : be angry with thyself, and the Almighty will turn away his anger from thee : condemn thyself, and God will acquit thee : in nowise extenuate thy sins, nor justify thyself. Think the worst of thyself, and be willing that others should think meanly of thee, and heartily love them that slight thee. This is the frame with which God is well pleased : pass sentence on thyself, and God will absolve thee : set thyself at his footstool, and he will lift thee up into the throne.

2d, *Labour for sincerity.* This is not a distinct grace from the rest ; yet, for the doctrine’s sake, I speak to it distinctly. Uprightness is the great thing that God seeks after and covenants for. It renders all our persons and performances acceptable before God. Such as are upright in the way are God’s delight. To these are all the promises of peace, salvation, pardon, preservation, and blessedness. In a word, there is no good thing God will withhold from them that walk uprightly. This was Noah’s praise, that he was upright in his generation ; this was that which set off Job at such a rate, that God doth so extol him for, and, as it were, made his boast of him, the singular sincerity and integrity of his heart. Study to be upright. See that the main bent of thy heart be to please God and honour him ; that God’s interest be uppermost with you ; that he have the chief share in you ; and that the eye of the soul be principally to him ; for in this sincerity doth consist, as to your main state. Let your great care be your hearts ; here is a Christian’s great work. The Lord seeth not as man seeth ; for man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart : see therefore that you look to it. Let thy eye be chiefly where

God's eye is : he minds not so much what thou dost, as with what heart. Go then and do likewise ; yet be not satisfied in this, that you are upright as to your estates, but labour to approve yourselves in uprightness to God in your particular actions. Do common as well as spiritual actions with holy ends : much of your lives is lost for want hereof. So much as is done for God, of his grace he counts himself our debtor for : but what is done for no higher end than self, is lost from our account.

3d, *Put on a spirit of zeal and activity.* How wonderfully is God pleased with Phinehas' zeal ! what a great approbation doth he manifest of him ! what attention doth he give to him ! He is so greatly pleased with the zealous appearance of him, that he turns away his displeasure from the whole congregation of Israel, and overlooks their crimson provocation against him. On the contrary, there is nothing that God is more displeased with than remissness and lifelessness, and indifference in religion. The lukewarm water is not a greater offence in the stomach, than the lukewarm professor to God ; and therefore he will spew such a one out of his mouth. Christians, where is your zeal for the Lord of Hosts ? Christ's redeemed must be " zealous of good works." " Not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, instantly, night and day, for the hope of the promise." Do not only that which is right in the sight of the Lord, but do it with all your heart. The Lord loveth a willing servant. Bestir yourselves for the Lord. Be ye followers of Christ, who went up and down doing good. Every Christian should be a common blessing, a public good. This is to be the children of your Father which is in heaven, who is " good unto all, and his tender mercies are over all his works : " and be sure that the father doth best love that child that is most like him. A private narrow spirit is a low and a base spirit, unworthy of a Christian. A catholic communicative spirit is full of great desires and great designs ; a large heart set " upon doing

good," whose fire, though ever hottest within, will be breaking forth of his breast, and provoking others ; whose love will not be confined to a party, but gladly and thankfully owneth Christ wherever he sees him. This catholic spirit, I say, is the glory of religion, the church's blessing, and God's delight.

4th, *Lively faith.* This is a precious grace in God's account ; it giveth glory to God, and therefore God taketh no small pleasure in it. By faith Enoch obtained that testimony, that he pleased God. If you would walk so as to please God, you must walk by faith. Christians must look to the things unseen ; they must not live at the common rate. Christ must be their life and breath, their prayer and their promises, their daily bread. By faith, the elders obtained that good report. It was faith that Christ was so greatly taken with in the centurion, which made him to commend him for a none-such. This was that which won such singular praise and approbation from our Saviour to the woman of Canaan, even her victorious faith. " Thou hast taken away my heart, my sister, my spouse : thou hast taken my heart with one of thine eyes," that is, with thy faith. Live in the power of faith, and thou wilt please him to the heart ; give glory to him by believing. Let the life thou livest in the flesh be by faith of the Son of God. Faith, as one well says, is the navel of morality.

Live by faith in prosperity. Though thou hast the world about thee, let it not be above thee ; keep it at thy feet ; use it as thy servant ; be much in the views of glory and contemplations of eternity ; buy as " though thou possessedst not ; rejoice as though thou rejoicedst not ; love as though thou lovedst not ; use this world as not abusing it : " it is but a fashion, not a substance, and that which is passing away. Use it therefore with mortified affections, and prove the sincerity of your faith by the victory over your inordinate content and delight in, and desires after, and cares for, the things of this world.

Live by faith in adversity ; weep as though you wept not, enduring the cross, and despising the shame, as looking unto Jesus, accounting Christ's reproaches your riches, his shame your glory. Compare these light afflictions with the promises ; count, if you can, the riches that are laid up in them ; roll yourselves upon the Lord, and know that your heavenly Father hath no greater delight than to see his children trust him with confidence, when all visible helps are out of sight, and he seems to be their enemy.

5th, *Put on the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit* ; this is in the sight of God of great price. Study to be like your Father, slow to anger, ready to forgive, forgetting injuries, loving enemies, requiting ill-will with kindness, ill-words with courtesies, neglect with benefits ; and, if any wrong you, do him kindness the sooner : so shall you bear his likeness, and be his delight. And, know, if you are of unmortified passions and unbridled tongues, that God hath a special hatred and displeasure against a froward heart and a froward tongue. O ! seek meekness : how can the holy Dove rest in an angry heart ? Christ is a lamb of meekness ; how can he take pleasure in an unquiet contentious spirit ? Verily with the froward he will show himself froward. If you will not forgive others, he will not forgive you. Art thou hard to be pleased, a froward wife, a froward master, a cross and wilful servant ? Surely God will not be pleased with thee ; he will mete to you as you measure to others.

6th, *Get a spirit of self denial.* God is then pleased best when self is displeased most. When we can be content to be empty, content to be abased, that God may be honoured, and, with the holy Baptist, are willing to be eclipsed by Christ, willing to decrease, that he may increase, counting ourselves no losers while his interest is a gainer, rejoicing that we are made low for Christ's advancement ; this is well-pleasing unto God. How greatly was he pleased with Solomon's self-denying choice, giving him his asking, and throwing in riches and honour into the bargain ! Strange

was Abraham's self-denial ! What ! to sacrifice, with his own hand, the whole hope of his family, the heir of promise, the child of his years, a son, an only son, when his life was bound up in the lad's life ! Was ever mortal thus put to it ? But Abraham shall not be a loser ; God gives him a testimony from heaven ; blesses him, blesses his seed, blesses all nations in him. Wonderful was Moses' self-denial, but more wonderful were his acceptance and reward. None like Moses. God preferred him in a better manner than Pharaoh could. He must speak to him face to face, as a man to his friend ; his word shall be as it were a law with God : speak for whom he will, they shall be spared, though they seem to be destined to destruction. But, speak against him who durst, they shall be sure to bear their iniquity. Forget thyself ; announce thine own wisdom, thine own worthiness, thine own will ; bridle thy passions, curb thy appetite ; this do, and thou shalt be greatly accepted, and shalt find that God's favour will infinitely reward thee for all the murmuring oppositions and discontents of thy flesh, which will be ready to be impatient to have the reins held so hard.

7th, *Maintain a spirit of resolution and constancy in the ways of God.* This was the renown of the three worthies. They feared not the fierceness of Nebuchadnezzar's rage, nor the fire of the furnace ; all the world could not make them bow ; and how gloriously did God own them, and miraculously evidence his pleasure in them. Stand your ground ; resolve to live and die by substantial godliness : cleave to the Lord with full purpose of heart ; let no difficulties make you change your station ; then shall you be an honour and a pleasure to God that made you.

Well then, would you know what frame of heart is pleasing to God ? Why, this humble, sincere, zealous, active frame ; this believing, meek, self-denying, resolved frame : this is the frame that is well pleasing in the "sight of God."

II. *As to your performance.* More briefly, that those may please God, you must heedfully observe these five things :—

1. *That they be done by the right rule,* which is God's word. You must not follow the imaginations of your own hearts ; you must not do that which is right in your own eyes ; in all sacred actions you must have God's commands to warrant you. You may not offer to God that of which you are not able to say, "thou requirest these things at our hands." In all civil actions you must have God's allowance : be sure he will never accept that which this world condemns : under pain of God's displeasure, dare not you set your hand to what the world forbids.

2. *That they be done to the right end,* which is God's glory. How damnably did the Pharisees err ! how miserably did Jehu miscarry ! and both in acts for the "matter commanded," for want of aiming at this end.

3. *That they proceed from right principles.* (1.) Faith, without which it is impossible to please God : prayer will not avail, except it be the prayer of faith. We believe, and therefore we speak. (2.) Love. If we should "give our goods to the poor," and bodies to the fire, and not from love, "it would profit us nothing." Where the slavish fear of hell only, or the lash of conscience, or the love of man's praise, carries men to duties ; where any other carnal principle is predominant in the act ; it cannot please God. (3.) Fear. We cannot serve God acceptably without "reverence and godly fear (no slavish fear). The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him," in them that hope in his mercy. Observe the happy mixture where these two are conjoined : that it is a true filial fear. Saith David, "I will come to thy house in the multitude of thy mercy," (behold his faith), "and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple"—there is his fear with faith : faith without fear were bold presumption ; fear without faith is sinful despair : join them

together, and God is well pleased.

4. *That they be done in a right manner, preparedly,* not rashly and inconsiderately, in the presence of so dreadful a Majesty. Prudently ; for lawful acts may be spoiled, and done unlawfully, without consideration had to the offence that may in some cases attend them : yea, holy duties, as well as common actions, may be turned into sins, by being ill-timed, and for want of a due attending the present circumstances. Holily, not rashly, uttering any thing with our mouth before God ; but behaving ourselves as in his sight, heartily, not feignedly, with our lips going when our minds are gadding.

5. *That they be directed through the right means,* that is, "Jesus Christ, the only way to the Father." Bring all thy sacrifices to the high-priest ; offer all upon this altar ; else all is lost. Not that it is enough to say, "through our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen," at the end ; but in every duty you must come with a lively dependence on him for righteousness and strength, for assistance and acceptance. Remember to do all this in the name of the Lord Jesus : to come leaning upon his hand ; without this all your service will be rejected.

### CASE III.

*A Case of Conscience, grounded on the words of our Saviour, John viii. 29.*

"For I do always those things that please him."

Q. I. *Is any man able, in this life, to come up to the example of Christ in this, to do always those things that please God ?*

Answer. In regard there is none that doth good and sinneth not, and God neither can nor will be pleased with sin, no, not in his own people, but most of all hates it in



them, it cannot be that any man in this life should fully come up to Christ's example herein ; yet may we come so far towards it, that, not only in our immediate addresses to God, but in the general course of our lives, we may arrive at pleasing God. Thus Enoch and Noah walked with God ; that is, in their general course they walked so as to please God and approve themselves in his sight. Thus the meanest actions, if done by us unto the Lord, as servants of Christ, have a promise of acceptance and reward.

Q. II. *How may we come in our measures to be followers of Christ in this, to do always those things that please God ?*

Answer. In order to this, there is something necessary with reference, 1. To our persons ; 2. To our principles ; 3. To our practices. With reference to our persons : And here it is necessary,

1. That there be an alteration of our natures by renewing grace ; for they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

These wild vines must needs bring forth sour grapes, the fruit they bear (how specious and fair soever to the eye) is evil fruit. Where there is not a good treasure of grace in the heart, a man cannot in his actions bring forth good things.

Many enlightened sinners think, by reading and praying, and forsaking some gross and glaring sins, to pacify God, and set all aright. Mistaking souls ! let me undeceive you ; you begin at the wrong end : your first and greatest care must be to get your hearts and natures changed and renewed by the force of converting grace ; you labour in vain at the streams, while the fountain of corruption in the heart remains in its strength ; you must not think it is with you as it is with a ruinous house, where the mending of it here and there a little will make up all again ; but the old building must be quite taken down, and the foundation stone laid anew, in a sound repentance from dead works and thorough conversion of God. Till this be done, you must know God hath no pleasure in you, neither will accept an offering at your hand, as he doth from those that are his

friends.

2. That there be the acceptation of your persons through faith in Jesus Christ ; for, in him alone it is that God will be well pleased. So that, without faith interesting us in him, it is impossible to please God.

For the better understanding both these particulars, know that there are two attributes of God to which you must bear a conformity, or else you cannot please him.

1. *The holiness of God.* For he is not a God that hath pleasure in iniquity ; he heareth not sinners ; the foolish shall not stand in his sight ; he hateth all the workers of iniquity.

2. *The justice of God.* For he will by no means clear the guilty. Could we have inherent holiness in us, in our unpardoned state, yet justice could not but be infinitely offended while guilt lieth unremoved, as you may see in Christ ; for, though he were perfectly holy, yet being under the guilt of our sins imputed to him, the severity of God's justice broke out against him.

Now, man being naturally an offence, both to the holiness and justice of God, there must of necessity pass upon him, in order to his pleasing God, this two-fold change :

1. *The real change of sanctification.* I call this a real change, because by this there is a real change ; infusing new qualities and dispositions ; making him of proud, humble ; of carnal, spiritual and heavenly, &c.

2. *The relative change of justification.* I call this a relative change, because it is not a real change in a man's nature, but in his condition ; making him to stand in a new relation to the law, with reference to which he was before guilty and condemned : but now the law pronounces the same man clear and acquitted ; and it was not from any righteousness infused into him, but for the satisfaction and payment another laid down for him : satisfaction there must be, and

righteousness must be tendered, else God cannot be at peace. We have nothing to pay. O sinners ! away to Christ for it ; hide thee in the clefts of that rock ; run to the fountain open for sin and uncleanness. Appear not before God, but in the robe of Christ's righteousness : he sends you to Jesus, as he did them to Job. " Go to my servant Job ; he shall pray for you ; him will I accept." Get out of yourselves ; flee to Christ ; labour to be found in him ; else all your endeavours, in washing yourselves, will be to no effect.

3. *With reference to our principles.* And here it is necessary that some corrupt principles be unlearned, and some holy principles be received and retained.

Some corrupt principles must be unlearned ; as, 1. *That it is enough if we serve God on the Lord's-day*, and we may serve ourselves all the rest of the week. Though God hath reserved one day in seven wholly for his immediate service, (which is therefore in a peculiar sense called the Lord's-day), yet we must know that every day is his, and that he hath not allowed us one hour of time but only for his service. Indeed he hath service of more sorts than one ; but we must know that the business of our ordinary affairs, if rightly done, is serving the Lord Christ. God is as truly served by you in the working-day's labour as the Sabbath-day's rest, if you do it in a right manner, and to holy ends.

There are a generation whose religion is but a Sunday's religion, which they put on and off with their Sunday's clothes, and then they think God is fairly served for the week, although God knows, that the little they do then is but poorly done either. Never think God will accept it at thine hands, when thou livest six days for the world and thyself, for one that thou spendest to him. This shows thee to be under the unmortified power of self-love, and not to be the Lord's ; for none of his liveth to himself. You must remember, that you are but to learn upon the Sabbath how

to serve God all the week ; and not to think, when the Lord's day is ended, his work is done.

2. *That if God be served morning and evenings it is enough*, though we serve ourselves the rest of the day. God must be served every day, and all the day : you must be serving him not only in your feast, but at your common meals, not only on your knees, but in your callings.

Some think, that, if they keep all religious duties, they may do what they list at other times ; that, if they be intemperate, lascivious, unrighteous, it is but to make over again with God at night, and all will be well ; like the strange woman in the Proverbs, that, having made her offering, was presently ready for new wickedness, as if she had paid off the old score, and might now run boldly upon a new. Those are not the children of God but of Belial.

Others think, that though they may not serve the devil at any time, yet giving God his dues morning and evening, they may serve themselves the rest of the time. But in vain do they lay claim to God, who live more to themselves than him. This will be found horrible sacrilege, to put off God with but a tenth. God is to be eyed and served in all that you do ; and this is what I drive at ; that we may not divide ourselves between God and the world, between his services and our own ends, and so put him off with a partial service ; but that we may do all in obedience to him, and so may be entirely the Lord's ; that he may in all things be glorified by us, and we may not lose our reward.

II. Some holy principles must be received and retained ; as,

Principle 1. That the pleasing God is our only business and our highest blessedness. First, our only business : What is it we call or count our business ?

I. *That is a man's business which his livelihood and subsistence depend upon.* The lawyer reckons the law his business ; and the tradesman counts his trade his business--because upon these their livelihood and subsistence depend. Brethren,

our whole depends upon the pleasing God ; do this, and you do all ; miss in this, and you mar all : please him and you are made for ever ; if he be not pleased, you are undone for ever. How careful is the selfish courtier to please his prince ! how will he crouch and flatter ? and, if he can but divine what will gratify and please him, he thinks himself happy ! And why, but because all his dependence is upon his prince's favour ? Much more do we depend upon the favour of God : blessed is the man whom he chooseth ! in his favour is life ! but woe to them that have God against them ! they are perfectly miserable : reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them. If the Lord do but say to a man, as he did to Moses, thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name—happy is that man ! but, if he thus say : I have no pleasure in thee ! you may cover the face of that man, as they did Haman's, and carry him away ! Miserable must his end be if he continue !

2. *That is a man's business which he hath his stock and talents for.* If a man be intrusted as a steward or factor, his business is to buy in the commodities that are useful. Beloved, all our time, parts, interests, food, raiment, and all other mercies, spiritual or temporal, are the stock wherewith God has intrusted us, and are all for his own use and service. And is it not a sad and fearful case, that God should have so great a stock going, as lies in the hands of all the sons of men, and yet have, if I may so speak, so little profit of it, I mean so little glory by it, that he should sow so much and reap so little, strew so much and gather so little ? Is it not sad, that men should have so much in vain ? Hast thou health and wealth, and dost thou not use them for God ? It is all in vain. Hast thou understanding, and yet improved it but for contriving thine own affairs and worldly designs ? thy reason and understanding are become vain. O ! how wilt thou answer, that thou hast had so great a stock in thy hands, and made so little improvement of it ? It had been

well for some men if they never had a foot of land or an hour of ease, if they never had the understanding of men, because they have not used their talents for God, and for the ends for which they were put into their hands.

3. *That is a man's business which his capacities do call for.* It is a man's business, if in the capacity of a judge, to do justice ; or of a servant, to do his master's will. Brethren, all your capacities evidence it to be your business to please God ; you are his friends, you are his servants, therefore you must please him well in all things ; his children, and therefore must set yourselves to honour him ; his spouse, and therefore it is your business to please your husband.

4. *That is a man's business which he hath a maintenance from.* If a man be maintained in the place of a schoolmaster, it is his business to teach ; if of a soldier, it is his business to fight. Beloved, do you not know at whose finding you are ? and do you think God keeps so many servants to be idle, or to mind their own designs and pleasures ? God hath cut you out every one his work, every man his hands full : so much work is to be done within door, and so much without door ; so much towards God, towards your neighbour, towards your own selves, that you have no time to be idle in, and you shall dearly reckon for it, if you will eat his bread, and will not do his work. And, as pleasing God is our chief business,

Principle 2. So it is also our highest blessedness ; for man's happiness lies in God's favour. Our happiness is in attaining the end of our being ; and therefore the great query among the philosophers was, What was the end and happiness of man ? Now, the true end of our being is, that we may please God ; for his pleasure we are and were created. And for this end also we are now created, that we should yield ourselves unto God, and being built up a spiritual house, should offer up to him spiritual sacrifices, acceptable through Christ. This is the end of our redemption, that we should not serve ourselves, but him, in

holiness and righteousness all the days of our lives, and that we should not henceforth live to ourselves, but to him that died for us. It is the end likewise of our justification, that our consciences being purged, we should acceptably serve the living God. In a word, it is the end of our glorification, that, being translated into heaven, we should perfectly please God, and serve him night and day in his temple. So that the pleasing God is the sole end and happiness of man. And this will be clear, because we then do promote ourselves most when we please God best : for, by this, you shall have this twofold advantage.

1. *You shall be the favourite of God.* O glorious promotion ! Haman thought himself no little man when he was on Ahasuerus' right hand, and yet he was at length but preferred to the gallows. But what shall be done to the man whom God delights to honour ? O blessed is that man ! Woe to him that touches him ! “ It had been better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and be drowned in the midst of the sea, than that he should offend such a one ! ” God is infinitely careful of his favourites ; the apple of his eye is touched when they are injured. Whosoever toucheth them shall not be innocent. God hath a blessing for those that show them kindness ; he will render vengeance upon the ungodly for every hard speech they utter against them.

O man ! doth not thy soul say, happy are the people that are in such a case ! Will not thy condition be most blessed, when God shall be thus infinitely tender of thee, take all the kindnesses done to thee as done to himself, and all the injuries done to thee as affronts to himself ? This is the happy case of his favourites !

2. *Every thing you do shall be found on your account with God.* Brethren, are you believers, or are you not ? Do ye believe the immortality of the soul, and the life to come, or do ye not ? the ways of most declare them to be such as do not, to be mere infidels, though professed Christians. If you think

there be an eternal state to come, will it not be your highest wisdom to provide for it, and lay up what possibly you can, that you may inherit it in the other world ? Will not every wise man, that knows he is shortly to be removed into another country, be careful to transport all he can, that he may enjoy it at his coming ? Beloved, if you do indeed believe that you must be for ever in another world, will it not be your best way to be doing that, the fruit whereof you shall enjoy for ever ? Were not he a madman, that, having but a very short term upon a living, should yet go building and planting there, when he had a land of inheritance to build upon ? Infinite is the mischief that comes of self-seeking and self-pleasing. You are eternal losers by it. God will say, you have your reward. Something you may have in hand, but the eternal reward is lost. Brethren, I am ambitious for you that what ye do you should do for ever, that all should meet you in the other world, and that there you should reap the everlasting fruit of what you are doing now. A wise builder will build for ever, and not that which shall last only for a day or year. Oh, that you would be wise builders ! Do all for God, and you shall have eternal advantages. Learn but this lesson, “ to set yourselves in all things to please God, and you will be promoting and advancing yourselves in all that ever you do ; ” always laying up a treasure in heaven ; still adding to the heap. And, O ! what riches will you come to, when, by every day, and every hour, and every action, you are gainers ! for, God will not let the least thing that is done for him, no, not a cup of cold water, go without an everlasting reward, nor your labour be in vain.

Principle 3. *That, when you have done all, if God be not pleased, you have done nothing.* Settle it in your heart that all is in vain that is not done for God : when you do not please God, you do not profit yourselves. When men offer ever so richly and freely, if not in such a manner as is pleasing to God, all is but a vain oblation. If men will do more than

ever God required, and be zealous in things that God has not commanded, it is “but in vain that they worship him.” Beloved, so much time as you have lived to yourselves you have lived in vain ; because it was quite beside your end. O ! it is a heart-cutting consideration to a tender Christian to think of this ; that when life is short, and time so little in all, yet he must be fain to cut off so much. Why, man, so many hours must thou cut off from thy days, and so many years from thy life, as thou hast not lived unto God but to thyself, are lost as to the ends of life and time. If on repentance thou art forgiven, thou art not rewarded for them.

Beloved, you must count that you have lived no longer than you have lived unto God : “To me to live is Christ.” I should account I did not live, if I did not live to him : it is the only employment of my life to serve him : I should not tell what to do with my life, unless it were to spend it for him.

Christian, thus you must reckon : so much time as I have lived to Christ, so much I have saved ; and so much as I have lived to myself, so much I have lost. It is not the man, but the beast, that lives while we live below our reason, which distinguishes the human life from that of brutes. Now, while we live not to God, we live utterly below our reason itself ; which is sufficiently discovered in that God is the author and end of man. Doth not reason dictate, that God should have the glory of his own work, and the vessel should be to the potter’s use ? Doth any man plant a vineyard, or keep a flock, and not expect the fruit or milk ? “God hath made

thee, O man, for himself,” and hast thou the face of a man, and dost not blush at this, to think that God should make and mention thee in vain ? If thou hast a grain of ingenuity, thou wilt abhor the thoughts of this, that thou shouldst be in vain. Why, so much as thou art for thyself, thou art for nothing. It may be thou livest a very busy life,

but thou actest not for God ; thou art all this while but busily doing nothing. Thou mayest sit down in the evening, and say, “I have been all this day doing nothing.” Thou wilt find a blank in God’s book for that day. Nothing on thy account ; or this sad record, “such a day spent, and nothing done.” God has his day-book, and takes notice of all your carriages, how you rise, and how you go forth to your labours ; how you speak, how you eat, and whether you eye him, and his glory in all, or look no higher than yourselves. “We have been toiling all night, and caught nothing.” May not this be the sad complaint of many a man : I have been toiling all my life, and yet have done nothing, because what I did was not done unto the Lord ? How would you take it of your servants, if, coming home in the evening, you should find every one of them minding their own business and pleasure, and your work left undone ? Is it not sad, sirs, that so many days and hours should pass over us, and we be no nearer our end than we were before ? Your little children are busy from morning till night, and yet all the while have been doing nothing ; and so are you, when you are but seeking your carnal selves, and not serving and pleasing God in what you undertake.

Principle 4. *That the favour of all the world can nothing avail you, if God be not pleased with you and by you.* If there were any that could save you from his wrath, you need not be solicitous to please him ; and, if he be not well pleased, we are all undone : “Thou, even thou, art to be feared ; and who shalt stand when once thou art angry ?” When men have slight thoughts of God’s anger, and the fear and dread of him are not on their hearts, no wonder if they be not careful to please him. You must be convinced that the displeasure of God is the most formidable thing in the world, else you can never learn this great lesson. Beloved, if you should please men, and all the world should be on your side, what would this avail, while God is your enemy ? If all men should bless you and speak well of you, what

would this profit when God should rise up in judgment against you and condemn you ? It is not a man's bar, but God's that you must stand at ; it is not by men's votes you must be cast or acquitted ; it will not go by most voices, but God himself is the judge. In his breast it is whether you shall live or die. If a man were upon trial for his life, what would it avail him that all his fellow-prisoners, and the whole crowd about him were for him, when the whole bench and jury were against him ? If your lives and estates were in question, to whom would you go to make a friend, the judge or the people ? Sirs, be convinced that, if God be against you, it is as bad as if God and all the world were against you ; for all signifies nothing without him. O ! whatever you do, study to get in and keep with him. I tell you the time is coming when the breath of men will signify nothing : when their commendation will do you no good. O man, though all the world should give thee their hands, and subscribe thy certificate, it would signify nothing in God's account, or his court. Many build their hopes of heaven upon the good opinion that others have of them : but I tell thee, man, though thou couldst carry letters of commendation with thee when thou diest, and all the ministers of the gospel should give thee their *Benedictes*, all would be no more than a blank paper ; and he would not save thee a jot the sooner if he should find thee to have been but a secret hypocrite, a rotten-hearted professor, all the while.

Principle 5. *That God would not be pleased with you in any thing, except you make it your care to please him well in every thing.* You will be one day ashamed, except you “ have respect to all God's commands.” “ You have not a good conscience, except it be your care in all things to live honestly.” If Naaman must be excused in one thing, to bow in the house of Rimmon, that he might not despise his Master, this is enough to spoil every thing. Some will needs keep God's good will, and the world's too, and so will give both their

turns : they will serve God at home, and conform to the world abroad. These men have two faces and two tongues : the one for the good, and the other for the bad company that they come into. Some held two first principles ; the one the “ common foundation of all good,” which is God, and the other the cause of all evil : and they worshipped both ; the “ good principles for love,” and the evil for fear. Just such a religion are many among us now of. But let them know, whoever they are, that, while they grasp all, they lose all ; for God will never own time-servers, nor men-pleasers for the servants of Christ.

III. *With reference to their practice.* And here, as ever you desire to come to that blessed life of “ doing always those things that please God,” you must carefully follow these six rules.

Rule 1. *Look round about you to the whole latitude and compass of your duty.* Great is the latitude of Christianity : “ Thy commandment is exceeding broad ;” and many professors scarce look more than one way ; but, while they intensely mind one thing, they neglect another. It may be, while they are taken up with the care of religious duties, they forget relative duties ; or they are careful of personal duties, but very remiss in the duties that they owe to the souls of their families ; or they complain and mourn over their own sins, but lay not to heart others' sins. It may be, they are more punctual in their more immediate duties towards God, but are very negligent in their duties towards men ; or they will spend much time for their souls, but little lay to heart the case of the church, the misery of perishing souls that are round about them. Possibly, they keep the Sabbath strictly, and pray, hear, and fear an oath ; but in the meantime, make little conscience of breaking their promises, passing hasty and uncharitable censures, spending time vainly, being unprofitable in their discourse, close handed to godly uses, suffering sin to go unreprieved, letting out their passions at every petty cross. Many will mind their duty to

them that are within, and in the meantime are very short in their duties to them that are without. This is too common a case. Where is the Christian almost that seriously bethinks himself, what might I do to win souls ? It may be you will go on in the company of the godly, where you may be edified : but, when do you go to your poor neighbour, whom you see to live in a sinful state, and tell him of his danger, and labour to gain him to Christ ? Yea, so much is this great duty neglected and out of fashion, that I am afraid many question whether it be a duty or not ; as if you might let sin lie upon the soul of your brother, and yet be innocent. If it were but his ox or ass that lay ready to perish, you would make no question but it were your duty to help him out of the ditch ; and do you think in earnest that you owe more to these than you do to his soul ? Is it to ministers only, or to all believers, the Scripture belongs ? “ The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life ; and he that winneth souls is wise.” Surely the lives of too many Christians speak the same language that Cain spake with his mouth : “ Am I my brother’s keeper ?” It is true, God will have you keep every one, within the bounds of your proper station, so as to take occasions, yea, to seek occasions, as you are able, to be doing good to others. Do you not know how to get within your poor neighbour ? Carry alms with you ; do him a kindness ; oblige him by a courteous and winning carriage ; then shall I expect to see the kingdom of Christ flourish gloriously, when every one that professeth godliness shall arise and take hold of the skirt of his neighbour. O, see your neglects in this ; do not think it enough to keep your own vineyard ; let your friends and neighbours have no quiet for you, till you see them setting in good earnest to seek after heaven ; or, if you might bring in but every one his man to CHRIST, what a blessed thing were this ! I lose myself in this argument ; but I am content to do so, this duty being so miserably neglected.

Too many live as if religion lay all in “ praying and

hearing, holy confidence,” and the like ; forgetting “ that pure religion and undefiled is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their afflictions.” The other should be so done, as that this should not be left undone. You make conscience of being just, and true, and faithful, but do you not forget to win upon others by your kindness and affableness ? as if it were not written in your Bible, “ Be pitiful, be courteous, having compassion one of another.” Say not “ it is not my nature.” What doth grace serve for, but to correct the evils of your temper ? Is not ours a religion of self-denial ? Do not the rules of religion enjoin us to be followers of whatsoever is lovely and of good report, and may render religion amiable to the world ?

Rule 2. *Use a wise forecast, that every day may fall in its time and order, and every work may have its room.* It is not enough to do God’s work, but it must be done in his order. That which in itself is good and necessary, may be so ill-timed as to become a sin. It is a duty to tell our brother of his sin ; but, to rip it up in your passion, or to be retorting upon him when he is Christianly admonishing you, is a sin. Your worldly business must not shut out religion, nor religious duties take you so as to neglect your callings ; but every duty must have its place. But, for the doing of all in God’s order, take these five directions.

Direct. 1. *Begin at home,*

1. *In provoking to good.* Why must God plead with you ; “thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself ?” Be an example of thine own rule ; else the hypocrite’s charge will come in against thee. They bind heavy burdens, but will not touch them with one of their fingers. O observe God’s order ! “ These words which I command thee shall be in thine heart ;” that must be our first care ; and then, having got our lesson well ourselves, we must teach it to others : “ And thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children, and talk of them when,” &c. At least, if thou

hast not already attained it, be sure to learn with the first ; and, when thou professest to duty, intend thyself first, and speak most to thy own heart.

2. *In reproving evil* : else thou wilt be branded for a hypocrite. First cast the beam out of thine own eye. We may not think, as many do, mistakingly, that we must not reprove another, when we are guilty of the same sin ; but we must in such a case be sure to cast the first stone at ourselves. Be soonest angry with thyself, and most severe to thine own sins rather than to others. It is strange to see the great censoriousness of professors to others, and how tender they are of their own corruptions, and impatient of reproof. Reader, fear and avoid this sin.

Direct. 2. *Let God be first served.* Let God have the first of thy thoughts, the first of the day, the first of thy strength. How heavily is God displeased with the profane priests, because they will serve themselves first with sacrifices before him ! It is the holy counsel that one gives : Hold the door of thy heart fast against the world in the morning, till thy heart hath been first in heaven, and seasoned and fortified thence against the temptations thou art like to meet with as soon as thou comest below. Indeed all must be done as God's service, but so as that his immediate service must be done first. It is the counsel of several heathens, that all undertakings should be begun with prayer. Saith Aratus, let us begin with God. And the very Mahometans begin their books always, as men use to do their wills, " In the name of God."

Direct. 3. *First cleanse the inside.* Cleanse first that which is within the cup. Though they are much out that live as if all their work did lie within doors, yet remember that it lies chiefly here. It is a most preposterous course in religion to begin first with the outside. O Jerusalem, wash thine heart ! When once this is done, reformation will quickly begin in the life, but not otherwise. Many are careful that all that appear to men should be beautiful, but their hearts are

neglected : these carry about them the marks of the hypocrite. And what will it profit thee, O vain man, to have all secret from men, since God knows and detects thee, and hath appointed a day when he will anatomize thy heart before the world ?

Direct. 4. *Eye those duties that are of most importance.* The hypocrite is very punctual in less matters, but neglects the weightier things of the law ; judgment, mercy, and faith. He is for a religion that will cost him but little ; and therefore, words being very cheap, he will be as forward as any mighty zealot in the circumstantials of religion, and marvellously censorious of others that come not up to his mind, as men of wide principles and large consciences ; but, in the mean time, he is very negligent of secret duties, a great stranger to self-denial and walking humbly with God. He strains wonderfully at a ceremony, but it may be, he can swallow the gains of unrighteousness safe enough. It may be he will decry superstition, and never wants a stone to sling at a profane churchman ; but in the meantime walks loosely in his family, makes little conscience in his dealings, or will take up his cups as freely as another, so he be not drunk ; or if he will not take a penny of his neighbour's estate, he is most unmerciful to his good name, and will take up any report that is going. Brethren, you must make conscience of the least sin, and of the least duty ; but it is a fearful sign when men are zealous against less sins, and yet connive at greater, as these are.

Direct. 5. *Take the first opportunity, when God gives a fit season for any duty.* Let not Satan beguile you, by telling you of another or better time. It may be thou hast a purpose to reprove thy brother for his sin ; but how long wilt thou be purposing ? Now God gives thee an opportunity. It may be, thy backward heart saith, " not now, but another time," and so puts it off till he or thyself be removed, and he be hardened ; then, at least, thou art guilty of the sin that he commits in the meanwhile, because thou hast " not done



thy duty” to prevent it. It is in thine heart to deal with thine unconverted friend or neighbour about his spiritual state ; but it may be, while thou art delaying, death comes, and snatches him away in his sins, or takes thee off, and so farewell for ever to any opportunity of doing the soul of thy brother any good. How often are the closet-duties hindered, or miserably disturbed, for want of care to lay hold on the first opportunity ? We think another hour in the day may do as well ; but then one thing or another unexpectedly falls in, that nothing is done to the purpose ; therefore beware of this cheat. Our Saviour would take his season for prayer before day, when his other work was pressing.

Rule 3. *Do nothing in things sacred “without God’s command ; nothing in things civil without God’s allowance.* Offer not with strange fire. In God’s worship you must see you be well able to answer that question, “ Who hath required these things at your hands ?” Here the command must be observed without adding or diminishing, yet understanding this with two cautions :

1. “ Though men may not stamp their invented ceremonies with a moral signification, nor impose nor use them, though with good intentions of edifying people by devising means ;” as if Christ had not sufficiently provided for the edified of his people without their devices : and, though nothing may be used as a part of worship that God hath not commanded, (for, it is enough to make any thing rejected by the Lord of Divine Worship if he shall say, “ I commanded it not, spake it not, neither came it into my mind”), yet nevertheless those things that are merely circumstantial, and not in the general kind necessary nor intended as any part or means of worship, may be determined of by human prudence, according to the general rules of the word, which must always be observed. And, for want of understanding, many have ignorantly condemned preaching by an hour-glass, in a high place, in

churches, by way of doctrine and use, &c., running from one extreme to another.

2. We may not think that God’s ordinance, remaining for substance, may be forsaken, because of some “ faults in the administering, or in the way of their administration.” The administering of God’s ordinances belongs not to the people, but to the minister ; and, if he fails in his duty, by administering them in a way that is not, or is less edifying, it is my grief, but his sin. Hophni and Phineas were corrupt in their lives, and brought in much corruption and rudeness into the service of God, yet Elkanah and Hannah, with others of the godly, did nevertheless attend God’s worship and sanctuary. Much corruption was crept both into the doctrine, worship, and lives of the Jews, yet our Saviour (though he still cried down the corruption and would not join in it) never prohibited communion with them in God’s worship, but enjoins it, and practises it, both he, and his parents, and apostles.

But now, in things civil, it is sufficient that you have the allowance of the word, though not the command ; always provided, that the general rules be here observed, all to the glory of God, and not to abuse our lawful liberty to the offence of others. Now, your actions being thus justifiable, as to the matter of them, (without which it is impossible, had you never so good intentions, to please God), the influence and virtue of holy ends in them will be effectual to turn all into religious duties, as a touch of the philosopher’s stone turns the baser metal into gold.

Rule 4. *In every action let God be uppermost ; but in religious actions let God be all.* Let none of your actions terminate in yourselves ; but labour to be able in sincerity to give this account of any thing you set about, that this you do because it is pleasing to God, because it is his will concerning you. Set a mark upon this caution ; beware in those actions wherein self may bear a part, lest it should sweep stakes, and carry all. You may, in your common actions, have an eye to

your outward commodity and comfortable being in the world, but this must not be the chief thing, much less the all that you design herein ; for, by looking no higher than self, you incur this double mischief, 1. You lose so much from your own account ; 2. You usurp on the great prerogative of God. I fear we are not aware of the fearful evil in self-seeking ; it is no less than deposing God from the throne, and setting ourselves in his stead. It is God's great prerogative, and the proper worship that is due to him, as God, that he should be the last end of all the operations of us his creatures, and that all our motions should terminate in him. Now, when we eye our own commodity, and not God, and look to this more than unto God, we arrogate the divine prerogative to ourselves, and set ourselves above him ; which is no less than heinous idolatry. And, if it be such a heinous sin to bow down to an image, which is but the giving God's outward worship to the creature, how much more to seek and honour ourselves before God ! This is to give his inward worship, which of all is the principal, to the creature. O, how many that pass for good Christians, will be found heinous idolaters, because they have sought their own carnal ends more than God and his glory ! and many real Christians, though they mainly design God and his glory, yet in many particular actions contract great guilt, by looking no higher than themselves in what they do. I know you cannot be always thinking of God, yet I would have you never forget what you have been taught--in the entrance of every solemn action, to remember God, and make him your end. Lie down in the name of God every evening ; go forth in his name every morning ; resolving to undertake all for him. When you enter upon your callings, sit down at your meals, make a journey or a visit, do it as unto the Lord, with design to please him therein. This you may come to with care and watchfulness.

Again, In "religious actions let God be all." Here self (I mean carnal self) must be shut out ; otherwise this dead

fly will spoil the box of most precious ointment. It is true, self will be crowding in ; but you must exclude it carefully ; otherwise, if this be the predominant ingredient, all your duties will be but lost labour. What more pleasing to God than prayer ? this is incense before him. What more delightful than alms ? this is a sacrifice acceptable and well-pleasing unto him. How happy a testimony had Cornelius ! "Thy prayers and thy alms are come up as a memorial before God : " yet, when self is predominant in those duties, "prayers, alms," &c. are all but lost.

Rule 5. *When you have done all, be careful to deny all,* and deny not God's mercy in enabling and assisting you : this must be with all thankfulness observed ; attributing nothing to yourselves, and giving God all the glory. Take the pattern of holy David : "But who am I, and what is my people, that we should offer so willingly ? of thine own have we given thee." And of blessed Paul : "Not I, but the grace of God which is within me." And of good Nehemiah, who, when he had done the most eminent service for God, cries at last for pardoning mercy, "Remember me, O God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy !"

Rule 6. *Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.* Having carefully set out for God in the morning, and directed your common actions to "him as your end" throughout the day, doing all in his sight, and with a desire to please him therein, bring all to "Christ in the evening," and present all to God by him, confidently expecting God's acceptance and reward for all that you have done ; for this he hath promised, be your actions ever so mean, because they were done in his service. If you neglect this, you lose all at last : for God will accept of no sacrifice but from the priest's hands ; and therefore you must expect no acceptance with God, nor any reward from him, but only through Christ. You must be sure, therefore, not only to make a formal mention of Christ's name, but to build all your hopes of

success on him alone, and to come to God with an actual and lively dependence on him.

Thus have I resolved the case propounded. I will but answer an objection, and briefly press your duty by some motives, and so conclude.

*Objection.* You bind heavy burdens. What ! must we be always in the traces ? surely, this severity of religion is more than needs !

*Answer 1.* Burden, man ! it is thy happiness : if holiness and pleasing God be a burden, health is a burden, heaven and happiness are a burden.

*Answer 2.* This is no other burden than what God himself hath bound upon your consciences. “ What art thou, O man, that repliest against God ? Have I put upon you a devised and unnecessary strictness ; or bound that burden upon you which I will not touch with one of my fingers ? ” “ Say I this as a man, or saith not the law the same also ? ” Whose word is this, “ Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long ? ” “ Do all to the glory of God.” “ Exercise thyself unto God.” What have I pressed but what the saints have practised ? “ One thing I do, I press towards the mark.” “ One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after.” “ Thy servant that is devoted to thy fear.” “ Enoch walked with God three hundred years.” What is this but what the Scriptures hath foretold shall be ? “ They shall walk up and down in the name of the Lord.” “ Then shall be upon the bells of the horses, and upon every pot in Jerusalem, holiness to the Lord.” Dispute not against God, but up and be doing : it is an ill sign when the heart rises against strictness of the duty : you utterly mistake in thinking this life of strictness to be bondage. Who have joy unspeakable and full of glory, who know the peace that passeth all understanding, if not those that thus walk with God ?

Now, my brethren, let me beseech you to be conscientious practitioners of this great lesson : Study to do

always those things that are pleasing unto God. O ! that I knew but how to engage you ; that I could but get you to set these rules before you all the days of your lives for your practice ! It is not enough that you give the hearing, and like the preacher, or approve the doctrine. But, Sirs, what will you do ? Too many of my hearers are like Ezekiel’s, chap. xxxiii. 32. What say you, brethren, will you learn with me ? O ! that I might lead you on to a thorough acquaintance with the strictness and power of religion, and the holy frame which will be God’s delight and your felicity. Brethren, what seek I for ? God knows, this is my ambition, that I may but help you on the way of holiness. I would not that you should be such bad proficient, as to be always of the lower form, and keep on merely in a dull and barren course : my desire for you is, that you should not be shrubs, but cedars of tall growth, choice experience, singular communion, “ walking with God,” shining to the conviction of the world. Will you let me but prevail with you in so good a design ? Why should you mourn at last, and say how have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof ? I have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined my ear to them that instructed me. That I may invite you to this holy course, consider :

I. *It is very possible* ; for, first, God is very easily pleased : he is not like a froward master, that cannot, that will not, be pleased. If you do but make it your study and care to please him, and thoroughly set your heart to it, your willing mind shall be accepted ; and though you should not go through with the work, God v. ’ill say, thou didst well that it was in thy heart. When the heart is set to please the Lord, and we do unfeignedly put to it, though there be many failings, God will overlook them all.

Secondly, God hath told you what will please him, and hath cut out your work to your hand. You need not say, wherewith shall we come before the Lord ? He hath shown you what is good, and what he requireth of you. You need

not say, who shall ascend into heaven to bring down the mind of God from heaven ? no, the word is nigh you. God hath set before you his law, as in a table : on one side the things that please, on the other those that displease him. O ! that you may be found among those that choose the things that please him : otherwise, since you know your Master's will and do it not, you will be found worthy of many stripes.

Thirdly, God hath given particular rules for the doing of all your work in the manner that will please him. Had God told you only what must be done, and not how it must be done, you might have been at a loss ; but he hath prescribed the very manner how every thing must be done, that you might have full directions. He hath shown you how you must pray, and hear, and give alms—how you must carry it in all circumstances. He hath told you, not only how you must fast, but how you must eat ; to wit, with watchfulness and temperance ; with an eye to his glory, as the servant of Jesus Christ. He hath shown you not only how you should “ rest on the Lord's day,” but how you must follow your calling on the rest ; viz. with diligence and discretion ; minding him as your end, as those that herein serve the Lord Christ. He hath told you how you must manage your dealings ; with equity and charity, doing the very same to others that your conscience tells you ye would have them, in the like case, do unto you : how you must sleep ; even as those that know he encompasseth their path and their lying down ; and how you must awake ; to wit, so as to be still with him.

Fourthly, “ God hath given you special helps : to this end you have the mind of Christ.” And you have “ the Spirit of Christ.” Indeed, “ they that are in the flesh cannot please God : but you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit.” You that are believers, have not the law only in your Bibles, but in your hearts.

II. *It is very profitable.* Glorious advantage shall you have by this course. First, this is the most speedy and certain way

to assurance, for want of which many of you complain, but henceforth you must complain no more ; for either you will follow this course, and then you will have it, or you will not, and then cease your hypocritical complaint, when it is through your own wilful disobedience that you are without it. When once you are habituated to this course, and find it to be the chief of your care, and that which your very hearts are set upon above all things else, “ to glorify and please God, and approve yourselves in his sight,” you cannot want assurance, unless through your own ignorance ; for this is the most undoubted evidence in the world, that you are the children of God, whatever unallowed failings you may be guilty of.

Secondly, Hereby you shall be certain of God's gracious and favourable presence always with you. See the text, “ He that hath sent me is with me ; for I do always those things that please him.”

Thirdly, By these means you shall be always laying up a treasure in heaven. Brethren, “ what are you for ?” Are you men for eternity, or are you for present things ? Is your design for glory, honour, and immortality ? Are you for riches in the other world for your part in Paradise ? If you are for true riches, here is your way ; by this you shall be daily and hourly increasing the stock of your own glory. My vehemence is only that fruit may “ abound to your account ;” that all you do may meet you in heaven ; and Christ may show you “ your good works another day, as the widows did Dorcas her garments.”

## CASE IV.

What weariness in, and unwillingness to, duties may stand much grace, and what not.

FOR the resolving this, some distinctions must be premised, and then some conclusions elicited.

*Distinction.* This weariness and unwillingness must be distinguished, 1. According to the degrees of it ; and so it is either partial and gradual, or else prevalent and plenary. 2. According to the subject of it : and so this weariness is either of the members or else of the mind. 3. According to the prevalence of it ; and so it is either transient and occasional, or settled and habitual. 4. According to the sense we have of it ; and so it is either matter of allowance to us, or matter of annoyance. 5. According to the cause of it ; and so it is either from a fixed dislike of food, or else from an accidental distemper of the stomach. 6. According to the effects of it ; for it is either victorious, and makes us give over our duties, or else abhorred, and repulsed by grace, the Christian still holding on the way of duty.

*Conclusion 1.* When this weariness is only in the members, or at least chiefly, but there is still a willingness of the mind, this is no matter of questioning our estate. When the mind outgoes and undoes the body, and the appetite to duties continues in vigour, though there is a languishing of the natural strength and weariness of the bodily organs, this is not our sin, but affliction. But too commonly the body hath so much influence upon the mind, as causeth a listlessness and sluggishness there, and makes it negligent in its office ; yet when this does proceed from the failing of the spirits, tired with bodily labour and exercise, and from the distemper of the parts, our most pitiful Father considers our frame, and remembers we are but dust ; and our merciful High Priest, that is not untouched with the sense of our infirmities, is ready to frame our excuse, that the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.

2. Where our weariness in, and unwillingness to, duties, are only gradual and partial, not plenary and prevalent, it is not sufficient to conclude ourselves graceless. While the twins are together in the womb, and two nations within our

bowels, there will be contrary inclinations ; the flesh will never say Amen to a good motion as such, but will be lusting against the spirit, and will hang back when the spirit puts forwards, and pull down when the spirit bends upwards ; so that, while corruption remaineth, there will be always a dissenting part and continual conflicts, whence it is no wonder there should arise some weariness ; yet the spirit is the prevailing interest, and, though often-times foiled, yet hath mostly the mastery of the combat, and carries it against the flesh, though not without much resistance and reluctance from the rebel opponent.

3. When this weariness is only transient, during the present temptation or defection, (which, as soon as the tried soul can get out of it, returns to its former temper and pleasure in holy duties), there is only matter of humiliation. But, when it is the settled, permanent, and habitual frame of the mind, it is a matter of questioning our condition. The holy Psalmist, under a desertion, was even almost persuaded to give over with religion ; but, when he is himself, nothing is so sweet, nothing so lovely and desirable to him, as the duties of holiness. But for them who have, in their ordinary settled course and frame, no mind to duties, but are driven to them by conscience, or engaged by company or custom, or the like, their case is fearful in that measure, that duty is unpleasant, and not loved.

4. Where this weariness of, and unwillingness to, duties are painful and grievous, as a sore in the eye, or a sickness in the heart, the state is good ; but, where it is naturally allowed, and meets with little or no resistance, it is a bad sign ; for this argues there is nothing but flesh, and thoro ia no contrary principle in such a heart ; for if there were, the spirit would at least make opposition. This was the very frame of those unsanctified sinners that counted the Sabbaths and services of God an unprofitable burden, a very weariness, a bondage not to be borne. A gracious heart, when under such a distemper as that God's service seems a

weariness, is even weary of himself : whilst this is burdensome, he is a burden to himself ; he cannot enjoy himself, while in such a frame wherein he cannot enjoy God ; and, if this be the case, our state is good, though the frame be bad.

5. Where this weariness and unwillingness are not from a rooted dislike of the food, but an accidental and preternatural indisposition of the stomach, or a being disappointed of God's presence in duties, the main state is safe. You know under a distemper the appetite may loathe and nauseate the food, that a man doth love above all other meats when he is well ; and so it is here. Do you, when you are yourselves, relish more sweetness in God's service than in your meats and drinks ? Are no sweets so delightful to you as fellowship and communion with God, when you can attain to them in duties ? Do you come away discontented because you cannot meet with God ? Is the ground why your countenances fall, and your hearts are discouraged, because you have with them toiled and spread the net, and have not caught what you went for, or because you have no answer or income from God ? If it be thus, it is a sign your hearts are set upon God, and that you place the happiness and comfort of your lives in God, and that so your state is safe : otherwise when there is a fixed antipathy to duties, and an habitual dislike to them, and contrariety to them, the case is very sad.

6. Where our weariness and unwillingness are such as make us give over our duties, so as to live in the ordinary neglect of them, it is a fearful sign : but where, notwithstanding present discouragements, we hold on in the performance of our duties, and a humble waiting on God for removing our difficulties till we are brought to a better frame ; this argues well. The church herself may be greatly deserted ; but then she gives not over duties, but seeks after her beloved, and makes diligent inquiry, and will not be at rest till she hath found him : but the hypocrite gives up, and

will not wait upon the Lord any longer. Not but that a deserted soul may, under the violence of temptations, omit duties for a time ; but his condition during this is most painful, restless, and grievous to him, and he quickly returns again, and never comes to live quiet in the ordinary omission of known duties.

7. When our weariness and unwillingness are such as make us fall out with the service of Christ, and willing to ease ourselves of his yoke and throw off his burden, this is a bad sign ; but when we fall out with ourselves, and justify and approve Christ's ways and service, it is well. Thus it was with Paul ; he doth not quarrel with the law as too strict and severe, nor think of breaking off his bands and taking his liberty ; but he pleads for the law, and greatly approves it and commends it, and condemns the backwardness of his own nature. When men are more willing to be rid of Christ's burden than of the distemper that makes it grievous ; and cast about for ease, by widening their bands, and not by bringing their minds to them, it is a woful discovery of an unsound heart.

FINIS.

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